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P R E F A C E

THE following Retreat is intended mainly for the benefit of those who are dedicated to the love and service of God in the religious and the priestly life, and who wish to remind themselves from time to time of the solid principles appertaining so closely to their state, which give both spirit and strength to the discharge of their many arduous external works. At the same time, as it runs on what may be called the broad lines of Gospel Christianity, much of it may be found suitable to the needs of all who take an earnest view of life—who realise that the attainment of life's end is ever their chief business, and who, in view of progressing to the end, awaken their interest in the work, seeking first to know, and then to go the way.

It is hardly necessary to add that our spiritual progress is very gradual, and is indeed a lifelong work, and consequently often in practice more of a striving and an aiming than a perfect doing. Yet it adds much to the chances of our work to

know the way before us; for we can hardly expect to do what we do not know. It is hoped that the present volume may be of some small service to many, both towards the knowing and the doing. And the words of our Blessed Lord will tell us the importance of both the one and the other : “ If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them ” (S. John xiii. 17).

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A SPIRITUAL RETREAT

I

INTRODUCTION

CONVERTIMINI ad Me, in toto corde vestro.
“Be converted to Me with all your heart, saith the Lord” (Joel 2. 12). The good Providence of God that governs the world, and arranges for us day by day, allows us to gather together for this Retreat—allows *us*; for thousands of others He does not allow. A hundred thousand are dying to-day. God calls on them for the account of their stewardship. He allows them no Retreat. What would they give for ten days more life—ten days Retreat in which to make sure their calling and election; in which to turn to God with their whole heart? But it is not theirs. For them time is no more. They have had their lights, their graces, and opportunities. What they long to have, and what they cannot have, *is ours now*. Will it ever be ours again?

I. Our need of a Retreat is very great if we consider the state of our souls. Is it not true

A

that you have many sins in act, and in habit ; that you neglect many lights, and many drawings to better things ? Your use of the Sacraments is very frequent ; does your spiritual life grow in proportion ? Do you govern yourself by principle, and high principle, or do you move from impulse and self-seeking ? You live in the midst of Divine things, in the presence of our Lord and the angels, with the daily Mass and Divine offices. Is your *heart* there ? Do you delight in giving your thoughts and affections to the things of God ? Are your daily duties punctually and faithfully done ? Like our Lord, do you do “all things well” ? Moreover, has there not been a great want of permanent advantage from your former Retreats ? Again and again you have made fine projects, and expressed desires and resolutions to reform your life, and get nearer to God. But how soon your fervour cools ; your diligence slackens ; habits of sloth and tepidity get the upper hand ; and you return to your usual imperfect life.

Such is your present situation. And if you delay longer to apply a remedy, the evil will increase. Nothing but a good Retreat can stop its progress. Consequently the want you have of it is very pressing, perhaps more so than you are aware of. God, who searches the heart—*scrutans corda et renes Deus*—sees in you innumerable defects which your self-love hides. You must therefore return to Him with a sincere

mind and loving heart, lest He should withdraw His grace still further from you.

Again, to see further the need of a Retreat. You are often listening to the word of God, whether in sermons, conferences, or holy books. Our Lord's words strike you in the Gospel. The beautiful sentences of the "Imitation" speak to your soul. One spiritual book after another you take up ; and you feel they are all good and true, and all help you more or less towards desires for better things. Yet somehow the things come and go. You do not assimilate them. They do not become part of yourself ; it is something like writing on wax. It is almost like writing on sand. In a week or two the things are forgotten. If our souls were more solid and consistent—more like the hard polished granite—the impressions would remain a hundred years. Now the Retreat is to make you into something better, to bring you to more consistency and stability in spiritual life, and to give you impressions that will really be effectual and durable. But take care this time not to be so heedless over the things of God within you ; your *heart* must be in them ; they come in no second place. Divine things are not to be trifled with. God requires that we should respond to Him, and work with Him.

Another reason for the Retreat. We deteriorate by our friction with the world. Our clothes get the worse for wear, and so do our

souls. The trees and flowers lose their bloom in the midst of large cities and get sickly and easily die : so the spirit gets tainted with the atmosphere around it—often indeed it falls into serious disorder, with complications. What hubbub, what warfare, what tumult it has to live in. Who shall stand unscathed, loyal to faith and love in the midst of it ? Men of business, in “ the forge and working-house of thought,” run away to the pure air of the country to recoup their powers. Must we not do the like—get out of the turmoil of life and enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of Retreat, to restore and renew our spiritual life and vigour ? And independently of the world we deteriorate in religion by not advancing in a spiritual course ; by want of the strong principle of love ; by familiarity with holy things ; by an abundance of idle allowances ; and by a superabundance of spiritual indolence. The Retreat wakes us up to all this. “ It is now the time to rise from sleep.” But we must not only rouse ourselves ; we must put right what is wrong.

II. A Retreat is admitted by all to be a time of special grace. It is God’s own chosen time : His appointed time for attending to you, and working in and with you. “ Behold now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.” Who can say whether you will ever have the chance again ? *Now* is your time, *now* your day. “ If thou hadst known, and that in *this thy day*,

the things that are to thy peace.” Now is your day. All is favourable now—the surroundings, the silence, the special instructions, the time for examen and confession, the spiritual guide, the example and good odour of all around you, the inner drawings of grace that are very powerful in Retreat, and above all the voice of God to your soul: “I will lead her into solitude; and I will speak to her soul.” Now, therefore, during the time of special grace give creatures their dismissal. “Leave the jangling of vanities in thy soul.”¹ “God’s grace is precious; it suffers not itself to be mingled with external things. Love now to be alone, seek not to be talking with any one, prefer the attendance on God before all external things.”² It is now the season of grace. Be not half-hearted. Open your whole heart to God. It is His special time. He is altogether disposed to communicate to you. During the Retreat He is with us *communicative*, ready to communicate Himself, ready to give Himself, to send forth His light and truth, ready to take us back again, and to work within us. He has designed His graces for you—heavenly lights to enlighten your mind, salutary unctions, to touch, and soften, and gain your heart. What a priceless grace to a soul is the touch of God. Isaias was touched. Jeremias was touched. Daniel was touched. The leper was touched. Our Lord touched the blind, and immediately

¹ Hilton, “Scale.”

² “Imit.,” B. 3, c. 53.

they saw. The sick were brought, and as many as touched Him were made whole. The woman touched His garment, and was healed; and they brought Him little children that "He might touch them." Now the time of Retreat is God's own time for touching souls. Will you be touched and healed? If so, you must go to our Lord God now, during His own time, when He is so inclined towards you, but you must go with great faith, and great love.

III. And this is the actual work of the Retreat—the conversion of the soul to God, *toto corde*. "Be converted to Me with all your heart, saith the Lord"—not a little bit, not for a time, not by fits and starts, not piecemeal, but *with all your heart*. "If with all your hearts ye, truly seek Me, ye shall surely find Me."

Some say that they do not *find* God. But you cannot wage war with rose-water. If a great work is to be done, you must take adequate means to do it. Now the way to find God is to seek Him with the whole heart, and nothing less than that. You have to give your little all for the pearl of great price.

Many a time you have sought God before in the years that are passed. You have said, "My God, I love Thee with my whole heart"; "I give myself to Thee." In your youth, in your fervent communions, in past Retreats, at your religious clothing and profession, at your ordination, you turned to God, you offered yourself to

Him ; you dedicated yourself to Him. You said, "Now I will begin." Consider, was it with the *whole heart* that you gave yourself to God ? Perhaps it was ; God be praised. But consider again. Have you kept up your whole-heartedness with God, striving to be in truth and in deed "all for Him" ? "Some at first offer all, and then return to what they left."¹ This Retreat now is to be a fresh opportunity. Try your very best to be unreserved with God. "Be converted to Me with all your heart, saith the Lord." Say with the Psalmist, *In toto corde meo exquisivi Te*. To do this you will certainly require some plan. You will have to throw your life into some design. You must see God as the one, great, and only Good ; as our Lord says, "None is good but God alone." See Him as the Fountain of all goodness in Heaven and earth, in nature and grace, and all that is good in creatures flows from Him, belongs to Him, returns to Him. With this, LOVE HIM above all, choose Him, give yourself to Him, and live and work from love to Him.

¹ "Imit.," 3. 37.

II

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

DOMINE, noverim Te, noverim me. Lord, may I know Thee; may I know myself. We have to know God, we have to know ourselves, and then to know that we have been made for union with God by mutual love.

The first great foundation of spiritual life is the twofold knowledge of God and of ourselves. As Cardinal Bona puts it: "The whole substance of spiritual life is brought to three points—(1) Who is God? (2) Who is man? (3) How can the two be united together?"¹. Let us bring ourselves, then, before the greatness of God. We may see Him (1) in Himself; (2) in His works.

I. The knowledge of God in Himself. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end—the Infinitely great, the Infinitely good, the Infinitely wise, the Infinitely powerful, the Infinitely beautiful, the Infinitely loving, the ever-flowing and overflowing Fountain of all that is great, good, and beautiful in heaven and on earth; around, above, and within us in

¹ *Via Comp.*, c. 8.

nature, grace, and glory. "None is good but God alone."¹ Creatures are not good, but the recipients of God's goodness. "Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things."²

By Divine Revelation, and the faith of Holy Church, we know the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Let us love to contemplate them in our own feeble way, prostrating in our nothingness before the Divine greatness, goodness, wisdom, power, and love, that the pourings of Divine light and love may flow in upon our souls.³

We see the Eternal Father as the beautiful Primal Cause of all things: from whom all that is good has gone forth, to whom it all belongs, to whom it all returns. We love to consider Him as the Fountain of everything lovely, ever-flowing, overflowing. How infinite He is in His attributes, living in His own eternity, in happiness ineffable, Eternal Spirit, Intelligence, and Love. Then, as the essential Good, loving to diffuse His goodness, and so surrounding Himself with a glorious creation, He made His angels adoring and ministering spirits, like to His own Image, spiritual, intelligent, and loving. Calling forth His infinite resources, the vast material universe starts into being. How incon-

¹ S. Luke 18. 19.

² Rom. 11. 36.

³ While all God's works *ab extra* are attributed to the Trinity, we may, in dividing our subject-matter, consider creation with the Father, Incarnation with the Son, and sanctification with the Holy Ghost—as the Creed itself does.

ceivably great and magnificent it is! Our world is vast and stupendous; inexorable and overwhelming in its laws. But look at those countless shining orbs above us, rolling in the majesty of time, whose distance reckons by incalculable billions of miles.¹ Look at our sun, so astonishing in magnitude and power; and its system of worlds revolving, as our own, in space around it. What infinite conception, power, design, governance, to make, and to equip, and to move, and to manage such terrific forces! O God, how great and terrible are Thy works. Then comes forth from the Divine hand, man, in Godlike form—spiritual, intelligent, and loving, like the angels. And he is made, under God, master of the world here below.² Oh, how he ought to love his Creator! Who is like to God? yet man fell away. And Thou, O God, comest, and layest hold of him. “Unto us the Son is given.”³ “God so loved the World, as to give His only begotten Son.”⁴ Behold with what manner of charity the Father hath loved us. He gives His Son to us, not *lends* Him, but *gives* Him. Henceforth the Son of God is the son of man. He becomes human that we may become divine.

¹ The nearest fixed star is reckoned at 20 billions of miles. one billion being a million million. Others, 100 billions and more.

² “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels. Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou hast placed him over the works of Thy hands” (Ps. 8. 6).

³ Isaias 9. 6.

⁴ S. John 3. 16.

He comes to us—Perfect God, and Perfect Man, the loving Friend of Humanity, the representative of our race—born of a Virgin Mother, that the manhood and womanhood of our nature might stand once more in all their dignity and beauty before God. He passes through the stages of our mortal life, to be our model in all—hidden, active, suffering, and glorified. Then by a marvellous invention of love, willing not only to be with our nature, but to come to us one by one, He extends His Incarnation to His wondrous Sacramental and Sacrificial Life, finding His delights in the midst of the children of men. And as He says, “No man cometh to the Father but by Me,”¹ so by the Sacramental prolongation of the Incarnation, our miseries are perpetually sheltered under His mercies, and through Him we find access to the Father, collectively and individually.

The Son of God, having formed the body of the Church, it remained for the Holy Ghost to become its animating and governing spirit. The Church, being made up of men, not of angels, there will always necessarily be in her a large amount of the human element. How could it be otherwise? Our consolation is that there is the Divine element too. The human does not eliminate the Divine, nor does the Divine suppress the human. Hence, the presence and the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the

¹ S. John 14. 6.

individual soul ; illuminating and guiding the Church, and sanctifying, governing, and perfecting our inner life, little by little, in His own way. The Spirit of Love in God Himself, reaching "from end to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly—" He governs us according to our nature, moving us through love, freely, easily, and delectably.

II. Let us ever love to see God in the works of His hand. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen ; being understood by the things that are made."¹ Who does not love the beauties of nature ? How exquisite they are ! See the wooded hills, the far-spreading vales, the stately trees, the running waters, the bright-hued flowers, and the sweet and abundant fruits. What wisdom, power, and beauty they all betoken. And then look at grander things—the lofty mountain ranges, snowy peaks, mighty glaciers and cataracts, vast forests, and the awful ocean roar. And, greater still, the immeasurable universe around, the starry heavens, the sun, of such immense size ² and power, and all its revolving worlds. What inconceivable immensity and power they show forth. And in small things the Divine Wisdom appears as marvellously as in great ; such as in the exquisite form, colour, and wondrous multiplication of the flowers, and the delicate framework and clothing of every leaf and blade of grass. See,

¹ Rom. i. 20.

² In diameter about 870,000 miles.

too, the infinite variety in all God's works, both great and small, around, above, and within us.

The whole animal creation of birds, beasts, and fishes is full of marvel, considering their strength, sagacity, variety, instinct, and apparent understanding of so many things. How little we know of their inner workings, less perhaps than we know of the angels. They have a world of their own, so closely woven with ours; and not all the combined wisdom of men could create the smallest mite of them! "How great are Thy works, O Lord."

Turning in upon ourselves, we have a little world of our own. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The great faculties of our spiritual nature liken us to the angels, yea, and to God Himself. Look at the memory, with its prodigious stores, and its ability ever to store more. A subtle thought was put there fifty years ago, and here it is now, though millions of other thoughts have been there since. "How great are Thy works, O Lord." Intellect is a Divine power, and so is Will, and so is Love all capable of rising to the Infinite. Linked as they are with a body of flesh, there is further mystery. The body is a masterpiece of Divine Wisdom in its formation, development, and marvellous abilities, clearly lower than the spirit that informs it, yet having its own laws and leanings. The lower must serve the higher—and the whole man must serve the God who made him.

But God adds grace to nature, thus lifting man to the Divine sphere. And, as we see, admire, and love God in the works of nature, so we see, admire, and love Him in the works of Grace. Our blessed Lord, the God-Man, is the fountain of all our grace, the head of angels and men, establishing His Kingdom of Grace in our midst by His Sacramental Life, that we may ever go to God through Him, and draw water with joy from the Saviour's fountains; the angels are ever with Him, and with us, for "Where the King is, there is the Court."¹ Our Blessed Lady and the Saints are ever associated with us, and the Kingdom of Grace is established in our hearts one by one, through the inner life and working of the theological virtues. Hence, it is true to say that the Catholic religion is "the coming of the unseen world into this. And what we see, of this world below, is as a screen, hiding from us God, and Christ, and the angels, and saints."² Thus we come more and more to the knowledge of God by seeing and loving Him in the wondrous works of His hands, in nature and Grace together.

III. Needless to say, we know God, in order to love Him. Yet the truth is there—we cannot love what we do not know. Think of Him therefore, see Him, admire Him, praise and exalt Him above all for ever. Train yourselves

¹ S. Teresa, "Way of Perf.," c. 28.

² Newman, Sermon, "Invisible World," &c.

constantly to the knowledge of God's greatness, goodness, power, wisdom, loveliness. See Him around you, in all the works of His hand, above you, and within you. "Of Him, by Him, in Him are all things." Let your greatest devotion of all be to *the Presence of God*, around, above, within you. It will lead you to speak to Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to enjoy yourself with Him, to give yourself to Him *toto corde*. *Hoc est totus homo*. You see therefore how the foundation of all your spiritual life, and work, and well-being, is to be placed in the knowledge of God.

III

THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES

DOMINE, noverim Te, noverim me. Lord, may I know Thee; may I know myself. The knowledge of God first, the knowledge of ourselves second. They both make together the great foundations of all true spiritual life; quite indispensable to the work of our perfection. So that we must lay them, and lay them well, and build all the rest upon them.

It is perfectly evident that the whole work of a spiritual and perfect life—as of a religious and Christian life, and a priestly life, and, if it comes to that, the whole work of the Church—is *between God and man*. *Deus est agens principale*. God is the principal worker, and man works with Him; therefore we must know God, therefore we must know ourselves. Certainly, partners must know one another.

Having brought ourselves before the greatness of God—seeing His immensity and infinity, how He is the beginning and the end of all, seeing Him in all His wondrous works, knowing Him to be the only good, as our Lord says in the Gospel, “None is good but God alone,” and

creatures being, not good, but recipients of God's goodness—we are easily brought to admit the truth of our own nothingness. For if God is the beginning and the end of all good, and everything creatures have is of Him, and belongs to Him, it is clear that all within us, as well as without, belongs, redounds, and returns to God. The knowledge and conviction of this truth it is that paves the way to humility—that necessary and indispensable quality of soul, on which the whole edifice of spiritual life has for ever to rest.

I. I have much good *in* me. It is *in* me, but not *of* me.

Look at yourself; you are a wonderful being. But remember, clearly, it is all of God. "None is good but God alone," our Blessed Lord's own words. Therefore, you are not good, but you have the goods of God in you. It is the conviction of this truth that plants within you humility of the *mind*; and you must first sink down to the clear knowledge of your nothingness if you are to rise upwards to God.¹ God builds His greatness on our nothingness, and displays His omnipotence on our weakness; therefore, if He is to establish His kingdom within you, during this retreat—if He is to work within you, giving you of His light, love, and operations, in His domain within your soul—He wants to find you reduced to your nothingness, and on

¹ "Descendite, ut ascendatis," S. Aug., *Conf.*, L. iv. c. 12.

that He will build, and build safely, because He will see that whatever He does for you, you take not for your own, but you keep for Him. His gifts are *in* you, but not *of* you. "If a man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."¹ We must not be deceived. The knowledge of our nothingness is truth, and humility is truth. Pride is a robbery and a lie. Hence S. Augustine says that those who wish to be truly great must begin with the knowledge of their own littleness.² Get down to your nothingness. Make your intrenchment there, and remember that outside that all belongs to God. Let it be your lifelong delight to give everything good to God, whether you consider yourself or others, nature or grace.

II. Everything good within each one of us, in the natural order, the spiritual order, the physical order, is the production and the property of God. "He hath made us, and not we ourselves." What is it to have a Creator? What is it to be a creature? To be a creature is to be *nothing*, independently of God. And to be the Creator is to be the Fountain of all good, and to give of His goodness, of His beauty, of His power, of His perfection to the works of His hands. All comes from Him, belongs to Him, returns to Him. God allows His creatures

¹ Gal. 6. 3.

² "Magnus esse vis? a minimo incipe" (*Serm. 10 de verb. Dom.*).

the use of His gifts, the benefit of them, the merit of them—not the glory of them. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give the glory.”¹ Thus, we are conscious of our powers. It is no part of humility to deny that we have them. It is humility’s part to see them as God’s production and property; and thus to admire and love God in the creature, God in His gifts. How wondrous is our power of memory, of intellect, of love. Each one of our senses is a marvel. Our powers of thinking, of originating ideas, of expressing them by words, of reasoning things out, of transmitting our inmost thoughts to thousands of others, of working by head and hand in a thousand different ways; all this is marvel and mystery. Who does not admire it all? But all are the works of God. “He worketh in you to will and accomplish.”² You work with Him, indeed; you use the powers you have; but the powers, and the use of them are not from yourself, but from God. “What hast thou that thou hast not received?”³

In like manner, when you see things good, attractive, beautiful in others—beauty of form, clear intellect, high culture, rare abilities, sweet loving dispositions, and many and varied talents, in things of nature and art—all these are the gifts of God to His creatures; we ought to train ourselves to see the presence of God in

¹ Ps. 113. 9.² Phil. 2. 13.³ 1 Cor. 4. 7.

the works of His hands ; we ought to admire and love Him in His creatures. We ought not to cut the good from its source. We should praise and thank God for all the beauty of His works, and if others admire and love any good whatever that we have, that need not disturb us ; the admiration and love may pass through us, and go onwards to God, and if a thought of pride come, you have but to fly to the "intrenchment" of self-knowledge, and you have *nothing* in which to glory there. All this is truth, it is not fiction ; humility is truth, pride is a lie. How well did the saints understand this. S. Francis of Assisi "rejoiced in all the works of God's hands, and by the glory and beauty of that mirror he rose to the principle and cause of them all. In all things fair he beheld Him who is most fair ; finding the way to the Beloved by His footsteps in created things. With unspeakable devotion he enjoyed that Fountain of Goodness, flowing forth through all creatures, as in so many streams."¹ And as in the things of nature, so in those of grace. The soul of man is the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is within you."² The soul of man is our Lord's "homeliest home" on earth. "We will come to him, and make our abode with him."³ Therefore our Lord wills to enrich the soul. The light of Faith, and the trust of

¹ S. Bonav., *Vita S. Fran.*, c. 9.

² S. Luke 17. 21.

³ S. John 14. 23.

hope, and the love of charity are ever glowing there. Then, many extra gifts—lights, graces, drawings, movements—come day by day from God to the soul, and to every duty well done is attached a grace, so that light gathers more light, love more love, grace more grace ; thus a soul grows, strengthens, develops, progresses. But all belongs to God—as in nature, so in grace. The soul works with God, but its power of work is of God. “ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”¹ Let others admire and love God’s workings in us. Let us admire and love God’s workings in others. It is all the same. God is the beginning and the end, and we are the recipients of His goodness. Therefore, let praise, admiration, and love pass us, or pass through us. But on to God they ever go. For He alone is First and Last.

III. The knowledge of God’s greatness, and my own nothingness, brings me to humility of *mind*, and this leads to humility of *heart*, by which I love to humble and renounce myself before God, and if needs be, before men also.

When everything good in nature and grace is seen to be God’s, whether in ourselves or others, whether in men or angels, whether in heaven or earth, we rejoice in God’s beauty, loveliness, and glory ; we delight to think of Him, around, within, above us ; we love to recognise Him, and to enjoy Him in all things. All this brings

¹ Acts 17. 28.

us to our nothingness, and the nothingness of all creatures, and we are bound to be humble; and this is the foundation of all true spirituality. As our Blessed Lady said, He regarded her humility, and then did great things for her. Let us be established in self-knowledge and humility, and God's gifts and workings will be safe within us. However great His gifts to us may be, they are *His—in* us, not *of* us. This brings the habitual disposition of a humble mind. When to the knowledge of our nothingness we add the knowledge of our miseries and sins, we are brought to what S. Catherine of Siena calls the "holy hatred" of ourselves, and this breeds humility of *heart*. Then we perceive the twofold principle within us—nature and grace, the old man and the new man, the miseries of our nature and the riches of Divine grace, self-love and Divine love. And our acts make our habits, one way or the other. So the only plan is to humble and renounce the merely natural life, as leading us astray, and then to bring it under the governance of the Spirit of God, and to love all this humiliation and renunciation, which brings us to what Hilton calls a "rich nought"; seeing that on our nothingness God builds His greatness, and by renouncing our little "all" we get to God's great "all." But all the working of this humility and renunciation is the outcome of the twofold knowledge of God and of ourselves.

If we are well convinced that God is all good, and we all nothing and sin, our foundations are laid. It plainly follows from this that we must have confidence in God and diffidence in ourselves; that we must love God and renounce ourselves; and then set ourselves with all our hearts to know and do His holy Will. This is a compendium of all spiritual life. Let it ever be remembered that its foundations are the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

IV

OUR ULTIMATE END

ANTE omnia considerandus est finis, et secundum finem dirigendus est cursus. Before all things the end is to be considered, and according to the end our course is to be directed. All the world admits the truth of this. Every one acts upon it in the business of life, and we all act upon it twenty times a day. It is the common dictate of right reason and sound sense. In all human and deliberate acts it is our rule. Examples abound in daily life. If I go for a walk my first thought is of the end. *Where* am I going? I make myself clear about that. Knowing the end, I see whither to bend my steps. The view of the end shows me the way to take. If I thought of no end I should go anywhere. If you build a house the finished house is in your mind before you begin. It is the view you take of the finished work that shows you how to begin, and how to proceed. If you write a letter you have an end in view; if you lose sight of the end the letter is not done. It was begun for a purpose, other things came to engage you, the purpose was forgotten, and the letter never finished. If the end be

not in view, nothing urges you to work *in ordine ad finem*.

*Filii hominum, usquequo gravi corde?*¹ "Ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?"

Why are you so careful over your daily little ends and purposes and see your way to gain them without fail, ordering the means straight to the end, and yet for the great ultimate end of life you have not the like wisdom? *Usquequo gravi corde?* "How long will you be dull of heart?"

I. I will know my ultimate end. I will not be less wise in the business of eternity than I am in the business of this life.

My ultimate end is union with God by perfect love.

1. Union with God—because He is the beginning and end of all perfection, and apart from Him the creature is nothing.

2. By perfect love—because love alone is the unitive virtue, uniting two in the bonds of friendship. *Amor est virtus unitiva. Plenitudo legis est dilectio.*² Nor would all other virtues apart from love suffice for such union; but rather be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, as the Apostle tells us.

Taking a clear view of our last end as being union with God by perfect love, it behoves us at the outset (as Seneca teaches) to throw our lives into design in accordance with this end. And God Himself begins the work within us.

¹ Ps. 4. 2.

² Rom. 13. 10.

He is at once our Author and Finisher. He grafts His grace upon our nature, whereby union with Him by love is already commenced here below. And as nature lives and works by her powers of intellect, memory, and will, so grace lives and works by her spiritual powers of Faith, Hope, and Charity; Faith being the illuminating power, Hope the aspiring power, and Charity the loving and moving power. Thus, by Faith we gain the knowledge of God and of Divine things; by Hope we maintain our progress to Him; and by Charity we love and serve Him. This is the beginning of our union with God on earth. Hence, it is well said that grace is glory begun, and glory is grace perfected.

II. To know my ultimate end will not avail me unless I gain it. The knowledge of a thing is the first condition of doing it. I must know the way before I go the way. Hence, *secundum finem dirigendus est cursus*. If I clearly see that my destiny is to be united with God in perfect love, my business now is to dispose myself to this end, and make my life a constant progress thereto.

Understand that we are in the theological virtues now. They are the beginning of our union with God here below. They are the essence of Christianity and of spiritual life, and of sanctity too. The saints were all saints through the theological virtues, the only difference between them and us is that their faith,

hope, and charity were well developed ; they saw God by faith, saw Him around them and within them, they tended mightily to Him by hope ; and they found Him, and lived with Him, and worked with Him by charity. Here was their sanctity. But we are far from this development. Why don't we take it in hand ? We have the makings of sanctity within us, as they had ; they used their talents—from five made ten, doubling their faith, hope, and love ; they used their lights, their graces, the powers for improving themselves they had ; they were in earnest with God. Why don't we do this too ? “Trade till I come,” was the injunction of the Master in the parable of the pounds. And there was the steward who had “wasted his goods.” Each of the theological virtues is a Divine gift to our souls—a distinct talent to be used and improved—one of the most precious “goods” which the Master has to give. “Trade till I come.” Not for a day, or a few months, or years, but “till I come”—till I call you—till I require from you the account of My goods. Therefore, let us know how to use these three precious gifts.

III. Faith is the illuminating power ;

Hope, the aspiring power ;

Charity, the vivifying and moving power.

Every good Catholic takes care of his faith as he takes care of his sight. Who would injure his sense of seeing ? Who would lose it ? See

that your faith is not injured by want of care. It might go, as your sight might go, if you are rash or heedless. Every power is for its proper use. If you use a power, it strengthens ; if you neglect it, it weakens. Therefore, exercise and cultivate your faith by acting up to what you believe. The presence of God around and within you, our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the presence of the angels around the Blessed Sacrament, and ourselves. The Mass, the greatest act in the world. The Catholic religion, the coming of the unseen world into this. Our Lord, the head of angels and of men, ever in our midst in His Sacramental Life. *He* absolves, *He* baptizes, *He* consecrates. The Church on earth representing the Divine presence and authority in the world. Our living Superior representing our Lord to us. The rules of our state of life giving us God's will to be done. All this is the life of faith in exercise and operation. We have to "walk by faith, and not by sight."¹ The unseen world surrounds us as much as the world we see. "What we see of this world below, is as a screen, hiding from us God, and Christ, and the angels, and the saints."² "We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen : for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."³

¹ 2 Cor. 5. 7.

² Newman, Sermon, "Invis. World."

³ 2 Cor. 4. 18.

By hope we “forget the things that are behind, and stretch forth to those that are before,”¹ ever maintaining our progress to the ultimate end, seeing, as by instinct, the things that help us, and the things that hinder us; acting in this way as good traders, improving our position, increasing our gains, repairing our losses, taking and making opportunities for fresh advantages, holding to our ideal, union with God by perfect love, and making all we can contribute to its gradual development and ultimate attainment.

¹ But charity it is that is the actual link of union with God here below, for it is the mutual love between the soul and God, which, if a soul has, it alone suffices, and without which not all things else suffice.² Who teaches this in more emphatic language than the inspired Apostle? “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”³

¹ Phil. 3. 13.

² “Caritas, sine qua nihil tibi prodest, quodcunque habueris, quam si solam habeas, sufficit tibi” S. Aug. (*Tract. in Epis. Joan*), T 5. 7.

³ 1 Cor. 13.

It is certain that we know God by faith, in order that we may love Him by charity. Let us realise the beauty of this mutual love; it is certainly the beginning of our beatitude on earth. It is God loving the soul, and the soul loving God; God giving Himself to us, and we giving ourselves to Him; God abiding with us, and we with Him; God working with us, and we working with Him; God enjoying Himself with us, and we enjoying ourselves with Him. Moreover, in the nature of the case, love is a principle of action; in true spiritual life, therefore, Divine love supersedes natural love, as the spring of our actions. Hence, our Lord says, "He that loveth Me, keepeth My word;"¹ and S. Paul, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."² Love moves us to do the will of the one we love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."³ As a man loves, so he moves; and "good or bad loves make good or bad lives."⁴ Charity, therefore, as the life of mutual love between the soul and God is the *via recta ad Deum*; the direct way to the ultimate end.

With this we come to a clear conclusion. As before all things we must look to the end, and according to the end direct our course, we see that our end is union with God by perfect love; we see also that the life of love, in its beginnings, has been planted in us by the

¹ S. John 14. 23.

² Gal. 5. 25.

³ Rom. 13. 10.

⁴ S. Aug., *Epist.* 155 *ad Maced.*

infusion of the theological virtues. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed; our life of charity is there, but small, weak, and unformed. What, then, can be our way to the end of perfect love, but a firm grasp of the vivifying, moving power, already ours, of God's own love within us, using it as a habit disposed to its acts, and applying it to the works of daily life, that all may be animated with Divine life and love—God and the soul living and working together—as our Lord said, “I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.”¹ *Ut Te tota virtute diligant, et quæ Tibi placita sunt tota dilectione perficiant.*² All consists in the formation of a habit. Why should we not seize upon the formation of higher habits, as well as lower? Why should we not seize on the highest of all? No habit is higher or of more eternal value to us than the habit of Divine charity. It is a matter of using what we have. *Ambulate in dilectione.*³ “Walk in love, as most dear children.” Put it forth, exercise it, strengthen it, develop it, advance in the way of love, bring your love to perfection as a habit. It gets you nearer and nearer to God, it brings you to Him, it unites you with Him. Love thus becomes the end, and the way to the end too. Union

¹ S. John 17. 23.

² *Orat. Dom. Advent. et Septuag. Missale Ord. Præd.*

³ Eph. 5. 2.

with God by *perfect* love being the ultimate end, and the gradual formation of the habit of charity by means of its acts being the way to the end. *Excellentiorem viam vobis demonstro.*¹ "Show me, O Lord, Thy ways, and teach me Thy paths."²

Let us finish with the ever-to-be-remembered law of life with which we began, and let it never be erased from our minds, for it is the guiding star of our journey here below—*Ante omnia considerandus est finis—et secundum finem dirigendus est cursus.*

¹ 1 Cor. 12. 31.

² Ps. 24. 4.

V

OUR PROXIMATE END

It is quite evident that we shall never be able to get to God until we are in the proper disposition for uniting with Him. And as God is infinite Holiness and Perfection, it is certain that we cannot attain to Him until the soul has attained its perfection. "What fellowship hath light with darkness?"¹ And what agreement has perfection with imperfection? And how would heaven be the all-lovely place it is if imperfect and unpurified souls held their sway amid those realms of shining light and love? What would an imperfect soul do in the midst of the all-pure and perfect society of angels and saints? Would it not hide its face, and seek to flee from the unutterable purity of the Divine light? It is only in perfect purity that the light of Divine glory shines. Hence, "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy."² "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."³ Thus we see the necessity of getting to perfection before we can get to God.

¹ 2 Cor. 6. 14.

² Lev. 19. 2.

³ S. Matt. 5. 48.

I. Union with God being my ultimate end, the attainment of perfection is my proximate end, and is therefore my immediate business here below. Let me consider how far I have hitherto given myself to the study of perfection. As it is the main business of life I ought to know it, and be clear about it, and consider the *pros* and *cons* in connection with it. What hinders me in the work, and what helps me. In such a work—the work of getting to my union with God by perfect love, which may be attained very largely even in this life, to our great benefit, merit, and happiness—I ought to be full of interest, of ardour, and of real enthusiasm. Yet, is it so with me? The children of the world are full of life and heart in the works they undertake. Look at the musicians, the artists, the sportsmen, the mountaineers, the playgoers, and society folk; here is interest, here energy, here vigorous attention, devotion, and enthusiasm, and all for nature's perishable gratifications. Where am I in Divine things in comparison with all this? Time is short, life is speeding away, day by day my end is nearing. Is my work progressing? Have I made my design? Have I yet got my ideal? Do I know what aim I have to take? Is my work clear to me? Have I anything like a map of my way? Why should I be less wise in a work of such momentous issues than the children of the world are in the commonest things of life?

II. The work of my perfection shall be the one great project of my life. In order to arrange this the plan will be simple in intention, but gradual and arduous in execution. It is not to be expected that the attainment by the creature of union with the Creator is to be accomplished by any of our ordinary human methods. It is God's own work in the human soul. If, in nature, God is ever the principal worker,¹ and man is a secondary cause, clearly in the Divine order, and in the kingdom of God within us, it is God Himself who "worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."² "Every best and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."³ God, however, wills us to work with Him; as in nature, so in grace. And our first disposition in this work will be to *desire it with our whole heart*. Even in nature, if we do not want to do a thing, we don't do it. If the work is arduous we shall clearly have to set ourselves to it in right earnest, if we mean to do it. In other words, we must come from desire to determination. The weakness of our nature, the strength of our spiritual enemies, the constant play of our thoughts and senses, the habitual tendency to be drawn aside by objects surrounding us, all tell us that a mere dallying in the work will never do. If our hearts are not given to higher

¹ "Deus est agens principale."

² Phil. 2. 13.

³ S. James 1. 17.

things they will necessarily fall on lower. All this tells us the need of real desire, decision, and determination in undertaking the work of our perfection. Such qualities indeed are necessary for success in the common business of life. Those who are not decided are soon found wavering, soon drawn away to other things, and found to be incompetent. We ought to be as wise in our work as the children of the world are in theirs.

The perfecting of the soul being God's own gradual work within us, and we working there with Him, the first step is to make an oblation of ourselves to Him for this end. God does not give Himself entirely to us till we give ourselves entirely to Him, as S. Teresa was so fond of saying.¹ And the "Imitation" is ever telling us the same: "My son, thou must give all for all." "Offer thyself to Me; and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted."² Having made this oblation, we fix a steady gaze on the ultimate end, and then propose to order the whole course of our lives thereto by living according to faith, hope, and charity; realising God's presence around and within us by faith, tending to Him constantly by hope, and loving and serving Him by charity, and moving from this Divine principle of love in all the ordinary works of daily life,³ instead of

¹ "Way of Perfection," c. 28. ² B. 3, c. 27, and B. 4, c. 8.

³ "Caritas, in quantum ordinat hominem ad finem ultimum, est principium omnium bonorum operum, quæ in finem ultimum ordinari possunt" (S. Thom. 1. 2., Q. 65, Art. 3).

by the merely natural self-moving principle. Thus all the works of life, prompted and animated by love, become so many steps to the end; and the Holy Ghost soon takes the governance of a loving soul,¹ and God and the soul live the life of mutual love together. This is clearly the work of perfection progressing, and may be said to be the beginning of the end. Much decision and resolution will be needed to keep the soul in this path of love, to make it "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."² But when a soul makes its advancement to God its one great project, it *must* be consistent, and loves to have its life "all of a piece."

III. The essence of spiritual perfection is ever to be placed in the theological virtue of charity, as being the mutual love between the soul and God. The creature can have no perfection apart from the Creator. Its end therefore being union with God, its perfection must stand in that union;³ and the union of friendship is necessarily by love.⁴ Charity, therefore, signifying the mutual love between God and man, is admitted by all

¹ "Nunquam Tua gubernatione destituis, quos in soliditate Tuæ dilectionis instituis" (*Orat. Dom. inf. Oct. Corp. Xti.*).

² 1 Cor. 15. 58.

³ "Unumquodque dicitur perfectum, inquantum attingit proprium finem" (S. Thom. 2. 2, Q. 184, Art. 1).

⁴ "Caritas est quædam amicitia hominis ad Deum, per quam homo Deum diligit, et Deus hominem; et sic efficitur quædam associatio hominis ad Deum" (S. Thom. 3, Sent. D. 27, Q. 2, Art. 1).

to be man's essential perfection; and how in accordance with all our best instincts and aspirations it is to feel that the development of our perfection is the development of our love, seeing that "nothing is sweeter than love."¹ As God said to His people of old, "This commandment is not above thee, nor far off from thee: nor is it in heaven, that thou should'st say, Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it to us. Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou may'st excuse thyself and say, Which of us can cross the sea and bring it to us. But the word is very nigh to thee, in thy mouth and heart, that thou may'st do it, that thou may'st love the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and keep His commandments."² Moreover, it must ever be borne in mind that love is not only a bond of union, but a spring of action. In the work of perfection, therefore, charity is to be our motive-power, vivifying throughout all we do and suffer,³ and moving us constantly to fresh exploits for the love of God and our neighbour, all under the guidance of counsel and discretion.⁴ For love is "a fire, burning and shining. When it burns in the will, it shines in the understanding."⁵ It "spurs us on to great things, and makes all that is bitter sweet

¹ "Imit.," B. 3, c. 5.

² Deut. 30. 11.

³ "Caritas est causa motiva omnium aliarum virtutum" (S. Thom., *Quodl. de Carit.*, Art. 5, *ad* 1).

⁴ "Discretio est auriga virtutum" (S. Bern., Serm. 49 in Cantic.).

⁵ Bona., *Via. Comp.*, c. 9.

and savoury.”¹ And as S. Teresa says, “It is the property of love to be always working in a thousand different ways.”² Indeed, as we all know, the *habit* of virtue is for the *act* of virtue, as every power is for its own proper operation.³ The eye is for seeing, the ear for hearing, the hand for working, the foot for walking. So the power of love is for the act of love; and the habit of charity for the act of charity. It is by means of reducing charity to its act, by working from its principle, that the power of God’s love strengthens and develops within us; and this growth and use of the Divine life within us it is that carries the soul forward in the way of God, the way of love, and the way of perfection, leading it straight on to its ultimate end.

!As all this working by charity to the ultimate end is a matter of the formation of a habit, we shall have to content ourselves with very gradual progress. Our work in the order of grace is on a par with work in nature. No one becomes a finished musician or linguist all at once. He sets his ideal before him, and works up to it gradually. He must desire to advance. He must be interested in his work, and be industrious at it. He proceeds with difficulty at first, but practice carries him on, and things that were difficult at starting are easy afterwards.

¹ “Imit.,” B. 3, c. 5.

² S. Ter. *Int. Cast.*, M. 6, c. 9.

³ “Quælibet res est propter suam operationem.”

Repetitions of act form the habit, and the habit once formed, we act with readiness and pleasure. So it is in nature, so it is in grace. The love of God is the habit of habits. If we train ourselves in lower things, why should we not choose the higher, and the highest of all? We are able to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, to please Him, to prefer Him before all else. Why not use our powers, and develop our abilities? It is our immediate work, our proximate end, in preparation for the ultimate end of life. Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

VI

THE USE OF TIME

“ALL flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen” (Isaia 40. 6). It is a solemn thought that all things are passing away, and we along with them.

The days of our present life are numbered, and we are speeding along towards that day which is the last of our appointed course ; when we shall bid adieu to this world and all its works ; to possessions and pleasures ; to all our undertakings and schemes ; to home, to dear relatives and friends, even those bound to us most intimately, and shall go forth in nudity of spirit to enter upon a new state of existence, leaving the lifeless body to be consigned to the grave. This is a truth—as certain as the fact of our existence—that we are moving onward, and day by day drawing nearer to the day of our death. But what is hidden from us is the day, and the hour, and the circumstances. “Watch and pray, for you know not the day or the hour.”

The best of creatures come and go. How true this is. All the things we love and enjoy—

they come, and how quickly they go. The flowers delight us, they deck our gardens, and tables—how sweet in their life and colour—but very soon, “the grass is withered, and the flower is fallen.” Our dear friends love us, we enjoy them a little, and then we part; like “ships that pass in the night, so on the ocean of life we pass, a look, and a voice, then darkness again, and a silence.” Our travels, our parties, our games, our pleasant meetings—they come, and how quickly they go—like a dream, like a tale that is told. And so it will be with life at the end; all will have gone—come and gone. “All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, the flower is fallen.”

Every hour shortens life. The fleeting moments and “toys of time’s short day” pass as quickly as they come, never, never more to return, as water which has gone from its source runs to it no more. Our course is almost run out. The waves make towards the shore. So does our life hasten to its end. No endeavours, no entreaties, no tears, no desires will be able to recall it, any more than we can recall the least moment that has now passed.

To be impressed with the passage of time, let us take the average of life at sixty years; let us represent these by the sixty minutes on the clock, making the hour. That hour represents the span of life, and every minute is a year.

Now, observe the hand moving—so your life moves—on, and on, never to return. The hand gets to a quarter-past when fifteen minutes have gone—that represents you at the age of fifteen. Have you ever reflected that at the age of fifteen a quarter of your life has gone? The hand moves, life moves; twenty minutes past, you are twenty years old—a third of your life has gone. Have you begun to make provision for the end? Have you begun to weave your nuptial garment? You know not the day, nor the hour. The clock may stop—how often it stops before the hour is done. Your life may stop. The hand moves to half-past—thirty minutes, and thirty years—and your life is half over. How are you? Have you made your plans for the ultimate end? Have you thrown your life into a design? Now the hand moves up, and gets every minute nearer to the hour—twenty minutes to, means that you have lived forty years; a quarter-to, forty-five, and three-quarters of your life has gone. Are you now a formed and finished Religious? The minutes go by now, and the years go by—who can tell? You know not the day, nor the hour. And never, never will my time come back to me. Hence the question, What am I doing with my time?

I. As the time of my life is at once so valuable and so irrevocable, I must have a constant care of it, and see that it is never wasted.

The first great and awful waste is by using time to do anything that is sinful and wrong. We must ever remember that we are stewards, that God has entrusted His goods to us, and that we are to use them, and not abuse them. Now, when any one sins, by thought, word, or deed, he is using God's gifts against Him who gave them; he is not only losing and wasting his time, he is misusing and abusing it; not only wasting his powers and energies of soul and body, but perverting them, and directing them against the will and love of God who gave them. Therefore if we talk of saving time, and using it, we must have determination about this. We must give up sin. Inclinations and weaknesses there may be. They bring us conflict, and conflicts, victory. But there must be no will for sin. We must take our stand there, absolutely. A vast amount of time and life and energies go in idle gratifications. That is a most comprehensive word. And souls get into their *habits* this way. They like things, and as they like them, they do them. They don't *train* themselves as they might, could, and should do. They get into the way of pleasing themselves. As Seneca says, they have no plan in life; they don't *go*, but they are carried. They have no system for their intellectual and spiritual formation, and much less do they think seriously of surrendering themselves to God, of striving to be whole-hearted with Him, and of acting uniformly from

the principle of His love. Therefore, as they don't get to the higher plane, they necessarily live on the lower, and they get into their ways, into their habits, and their ways and their habits *grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength*. How many lights, how many drawings, how many graces have they missed. Their attention and their liking were engaged. We have but limited room within us. If we give ourselves to lower things, we lose the higher.

What are these lower things that engage us, that occupy our thoughts, affections, time, and energies; that so run away with life, that so shut out the higher things, and hinder the formation of the Divine habit of life? Idle gratification explains itself. Look at your idle reading. What are these constant novels? these perpetual illustrated weeklies and monthlies, and the vast amount of idle newspaper reading? But are you not habituated to them now? Habits of some sort *will* form. If you don't take the higher, you get the lower—or the lower get you. You have created the want. By taking rough liquids, you destroy the palate's finer taste. You have no taste for the Scriptures, the Fathers, the Saints; newspapers and novels engage you. Smoking takes the place of contemplation: society is chosen in preference to solitude: and evening games instead of prayer. Nature makes strides this way. Indulge a pro-

pensity, and you strengthen it. And the fire of God's love burns low from want of fuel and stirring.

Then, what about your thoughts? Idle thoughts use up a vast amount of life. The mind is like a water-wheel, ever revolving; on it goes, hour by hour, day by day. But what is it grinding? What sort of a miller would he be who perpetually puts chaff into his mill instead of corn? The wheel works on. So your mind works. But what are you working at? Look fairly. The amount of idle, vain, useless, silly, heedless, worthless thoughts that revolve within you day by day is amazing. You want self-discipline, self-culture, self-training. You need design, plan, clear principle in life. Are you forgetting that you were made for God, and that your life ought to be a progress to Him? What have all these long-standing habits got to do with progress to your end? *Quid ad finem?* You must return to your elementary instruction in the first chapter of the Catechism.

II. I must clearly not only avoid waste of time, I must order my life, by the proper use of time, attending to its distribution, and the faithful fulfilment of duty.

First, I must order my life, by choosing God with deliberation and preference, as my one good, my object, my beatitude, my end; then offering the whole course of my life to Him, seizing the principle of His love, and working from it,

and training myself to work from it uniformly and well. Here is an epitome of all spiritual life. But so be it; plan, system, design we must have, and a plan that takes in the whole life, and makes it "all of a piece." This is the most wise teaching of Seneca, and it leaves no room for waste and idle gratification. Let novels and periodicals go. Let the blind lead the blind, but attend thou to the kingdom of God.

Having thrown life thus into design, you must see next to its main features. Spiritual culture will have to be the leading work of your life, wherever you are, and whatever you do; or call it, if you will, the contemplative element. It means to say that God is your first object—*Deus cordis mei—pars mea—Deus in æternum*. It means to say that no creature is related to us so closely and so intimately as God is, and that no created love can compare with His. It means to say that "Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things," and that He is the principal worker in all the works of nature and grace. *Deus est agens principale*; and that therefore however active our lives may be, we must ever live and work with God if we are to work successfully; ever prefer Him to all, ever delight to be with Him, to engage ourselves with Him; ever attentive to His will and interests, and desirous to draw all souls to His love and service.

III. This culture is at once of mind, heart, and action; of mind, by searching the Scriptures,

and studying the Fathers, Doctors, and Saints, and the Church's science in dogmatic, moral, ascetic, and mystic theology, and cultivating all other knowledge, natural and divine, that help to equip the man of God, and make him "profitable to the Lord, prepared to every good work;"¹ ever taking care not "to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety;"² balancing well the natural by the supernatural, and nature by grace; going from mind to heart, from the creature to the Creator, from study to prayer; thus growing and progressing through life in the ways of Divine wisdom and love—proceeding from the contemplative to the active element—and giving to others, as S. Bernard says, *non de penuria, sed de plenitudine*,³ thus making the life of love between the soul and God overflow in love to our fellow-creatures—"nor are we to leave God by attending to our neighbour, nor to neglect our neighbour by attending to God; because charity even then rises on high when it descends low; and as it descends to the lowest, it ascends to the highest."⁴ Divine things ever come first in such a life. The constant thought of God, attention to His presence, love of prayer, our Lord's wondrous Sacrificial and Sacramental Life, daily Mass, as the greatest act on earth, enjoyment of the Divine offices of the Church, realisa-

¹ 2 Tim. 2. 21. ² Rom. 12. 3. ³ Serm. 18 in Cantic.

⁴ S. Greg., Hom. 38 in Ev. and Past., p. 2, c. 5.

tion of the unseen world around us—all these engage the inmost heart of a loving soul; living on them day by day, what room will there be for mundane amusements and idle gratifications? But love works great things. *Operatur magna*, says S. Gregory. Therefore the life of a true lover is active as well as contemplative. Being all for God it is fired with zeal for the Divine interests, and has a care in its prayers and aspirations for the whole work of the Church throughout the world; ever ready to attend to the calls of obedience and charity, and to sacrifice even heavenly enjoyment for the sake of saving souls, feeling with S. Philip Neri, “Were I at the gate of Paradise, and a sinner were to ask the aid of my ministry, I would leave the whole court of heaven to attend to him.” Thus it is that the knowledge and love of God and Divine things, and the great interests of our Lord and the Church, fully engage the mind, heart, and life of a consecrated soul. Therefore its time is bespoken. It is much too valuab’le to squander away. Fully enjoying the work of God and of the Church, the heart is where the treasure is; and where the treasure is, there the thoughts go; for we easily think of what we love. By prizing higher things, we soon despise the lower; and so by self-culture and discipline the precious flow of time is used for the Divine purposes for which it was given.

VII

AVOIDANCE OF SIN

“DEPART from evil, and do good” (Ps. 33. 15). If man’s destiny is union with God by love, and if the work of union with God by love is to be commenced here below, and to progress and be developed through life, so much so as to make this work the one great project of life, it is clear that we shall have to “separate the precious from the vile.” “Thus saith the Lord, if thou wilt be converted I will convert thee—and if thou wilt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth.”¹

The work therefore is twofold. (1) The riddance of evil, and all bad rubbish. (2) The acquisition of good habits, the strengthening of them, their development and gradual perfection.

The first of these operations is the most elementary, and the pre-requisite for the second. If a vessel is filled with earth and you wish to fill it with gold, it is clear you must get rid of the one to gain the other. The vile is cast forth, the precious brought in. These two operations are rightly and accurately named

¹ Jer. 15. 19.
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as the purgative and illuminative ways, leading on to the unitive. Therefore, in fact, they go on together, more or less. But in our considerations we take them separately.

I. The avoidance of sin—first, and chief of all, mortal sin, whether in thought, word, or deed—because mortal sin means the total aversion of the heart from God.

What an awful condition for a creature to come to ; for one made a little lower than the angels ; crowned with glory and honour ; made by God for Himself ; sharing the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Christ, and the Motherhood of the Church ; and destined to share in the everlasting life, light, love, and happiness of God Himself, of our Blessed Lord, our Blessed Lady, the Angels, and the Saints ; to find a soul so favoured turning away with its heart and its will from the ever-loving God, the Fountain of living Water, of all that is great, good, and beautiful, to the “ multiplying villanies ” that swarm about it, instead of fighting like a man for God and heaven, for name and fame :—

“ Against thyself thou dost conspire
 Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
 Which to repair should be thy chief desire.”

The beauteous roof of Divine grace is above us. It wants attention, care, repair ; and all this should be our chief desire. But the soul that sins ruins its beauteous roof. “ History is

full of ruins." Against thyself thou dost conspire. And bitter loathing follows burning love. Now, every one must absolutely take his stand. For no consideration whatever must mortal sin be done. Come what may, it must never be done. It must have no existence for us. Be perfectly clear, strong, and decided, once for all, about this, then there will be no wavering. Those waver who have not made up their minds. You must fix your soul in this absolute determination. It never shall be. If temptation should ever come, you must know beforehand what to do; you must turn to God instantly, choose Him, prefer Him. Love is preference. Nothing must be preferred to Him. Take this attitude, once for all, and mortal sin will never be yours.

II. Belonging as I do to God, destined to be for ever His, I resolve against all deliberate venial sins, because venial sins offend God, stain the soul, obscure the soul, trouble it, weaken it, fatigue it, rob it of the Spirit of God, and dispose it to mortal sin.

This is a long list: and by their fruits you shall know them. If such are the effects, such is the cause; such are the fruits, such is the tree. Who wants fruits such as these? Then look to the tree; then look to your soul.

1. Venial sins offend God—the dear, the kind, the loving God—the Friend, the Father, the Lover of our souls. How do you treat your

best friend ? How do you treat a loving Father ? How do those who really love treat one another ? The first instinct of love is not to offend the one we love. Then, God is of infinite Majesty and Glory. We should tremble at the thought of displeasing Him. We don't realise what we believe. May God forgive us for our want of thought, and all our lack of reverence and love to Him. How much we lose by not loving God enough.

2. Venial sin stains the soul. A stain on your complexion you would not allow. A stain on your robe you at once remove. Should we not constantly study the purity of our souls ? We are before God as crystals before the sun ; and venial sins bring dark stains and shades into the crystal. We must make some plan for the management of them. Turn to God at once, with darting acts of love and contrition, which suffice of themselves to purify the soul. Guard against *habits* of venial sin, more especially if there be an affection for them. We must be constantly striving to give God possession of His kingdom within us.

3. Venial sin obscures the soul. God delights to shine within the soul in grace and love. The angels love to shine within the human soul. But how will the Divine shinings reflect themselves in souls all besmeared with shades and stains ? God's dwelling is in a pure soul, and the sun's rays are reflected in all their glory in

a pure crystal. Sad it is to dim the lustre of our souls. They want constant polishing. The least breath darkens the mirror, and the least motion troubles the fountain; so our dark activities interfere with the light and love of God within us.

4. Venial sin troubles the soul. God's dwelling is in peace. *Factus est in pace locus ejus*.¹ But our inner life is in perpetual disturbance. Day by day our imperfect ways and our unruly habits are coming into play. They take up much of our time. They run away with our energy. They distract us from God in prayer. They hinder the sweet enjoyment of the Divine presence around and within us. They interfere with the formation of higher and better habits. They turn us aside from the direct way to God, being, as S. Thomas tells us, a "deviation from the right order to the end."² How much grace we lose through them. What a hindrance they become to our spiritual growth and progress. What barriers they become in the way of perfect love. We cannot yet expect a state of settled peace and joy. "The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy is virtue's prize."

5. Venial sins weaken the soul. The soul's strength is in its consistent life and principle of love. This inner life of mutual love between the soul and God is a habit which continually strengthens by use and exercise. But if, from

¹ Ps. 75. 3.

² "Deviatio ab ordine ad finem."

want of self-training and discipline, nature goes her own independent way, "blindly with her blessedness at strife," the higher habits suffer from the lower. Many a light, and many a grace are missed through the dark activities of the natural man. And we are creatures of habit, and if we use lower habits, they strengthen; and if we use higher habits, they strengthen; but if we use the lower, and neglect the higher, the lower get more and more the hold upon us, and the higher lose their hold. Thus begins the dwindling of spiritual life. Nature gets strong by use, and grace weakens from neglect. How much thought and care we should have of Divine things.

6. Venial sins fatigue the soul. A soul that is "all for God" is ever bright and joyous. Its life is "all of a piece," and its love energises equally in prayer and action. Thus its spiritual vigour is maintained by the consistency of its principle. As soon as it deflects, by turning in the common way to selfish gratifications, it soon finds a sense of fatigue in its spirit, and its flow of light and love diminish, and for its infidelity it becomes a punishment to itself. In all this, as is evident, there is a vast difference between acts and habits. Once in a way, if a soul thus deviates, it quickly recovers itself by love and contrition; but if it is habitually getting off the line, it will surely get into much inner trouble and weariness.

7. Venial sins rob the soul of the Spirit of God, not that they deprive it of the Divine presence within, like mortal sin, but they supplant, for the time being, the operations of the Divine Spirit, both in the mind and the heart; and how many precious graces are lost thereby. Our time and energies are very limited. Is it not sad to divide our thoughts and affections so much? The Spirit of God is the very life of the soul. "They who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."¹ "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit."² If our souls are, as indeed they are, the living temples of the Holy Ghost, and if the kingdom of God be within us, as indeed it is, what great care we should have to keep ourselves faithful and loyal to the governance of the good spirit. But much of all this do we lose by getting into our own wills and ways, and falling constantly on low, imperfect lines of action.

8. Venial sins dispose a soul to mortal sin. We cannot escape the laws of nature. Our habits grow with ourselves. If any one becomes heedless of offending God in smaller things, the disposition to offend heedlessly grows within him, and familiarity with sin grows. The going on in ways like this begets the tendency to go on further.³ Other and more serious venial sins

¹ Rom. 8. 14.

² Gal. 5. 25.

³ "A minimis incipitur, et succrescentibus defectibus, ad graviora pervenitur" (S. Greg. Moral., L. 31, c. 9).

now come into view. The principle of love within is not as strong as it was. The tendency to liberty and pleasure strengthens with indulgence. Will the soul that is not faithful to principle be strong enough to stand in the midst of fiercer temptation? Strict fidelity to principle is a soul's guarantee in the hour of trial, and if this consistency has not been welded into a habit, how easily, as our Lord says, "in time of temptation they fall away"—fall, yea, into mortal sin, because they were too familiar with venial sin, because they got accustomed to indulge themselves, because they deviated, because they departed from their principle, and finally were too weak in love to keep themselves faithful and true when the hour of grave temptation came.

III. By God's grace I will adopt a clear rule in the management of all sins and unruly habits. It is given by S. Augustine, viz. that if I cleave to the higher love, I shall conquer lower loves.

This is based on a clear law of nature, which we know by experience. The engagement of our affections with higher things easily gives us the ascendancy over lower things. As we value the higher, we regard the lower as cheap and contemptible. What sort of temptation would worldly things be to a soul on fire with the love of God? None whatever. And why? Just

¹ "Si adhærebis superiori, conculcabis inferiora" (S. Aug. in Ps. 45).

because it is engaged and fully satisfied with the best of all objects. Therefore, weak souls are tempted by lower things, because they have not grasped the higher. S. Paul teaches us this when he says, "Be not overcome by evil ; but overcome evil by good."¹ In other words, don't be conquered by sin, but in order to escape this, you must seize upon the good principle, and by means of good you conquer evil. By means of higher things you subdue the lower. Is this a secret ? If so, let it be known. The moral is that we must grasp the higher love at the outset, and by its power manage all the rest, by the elimination of evil and the cultivation of good.

¹ Rom. 12. 21.

VIII

TEPIDITY

THERE is one condition of soul that has a singular and awful condemnation of God upon it—a condemnation altogether its own—and that is the state of tepidity. “I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth.”¹ How dreadfully the good and loving God must loathe the lukewarm soul to have chosen language such as this. But the fact is that tepidity treats God at a cheap rate. It is a case of *læsæ Majestatis*—of injury to the Divine Majesty. The sacred service of God is so lightly considered and treated as to be got through anyhow—neglected, postponed, given a secondary place, or no place at all, supplanted by other preferences; gone through hastily, perfunctorily, as a task, with no relish; quickly dismissed, run away from, and heart and spirit are elsewhere. It is not to be supposed that the Infinite Majesty of God can endure such treatment from a creature. He who is the all-wise and loving Friend and Father of

¹ Apoc. 3. 15.

man, inviting us to Himself, ready to give us Himself, to make us sharers in His own life and blessedness. When souls are not appreciative, when their heart is not in their calling, when they turn from their best friend and seek and enjoy strangers instead—we know how it is, even among ourselves. Where, then, is the honour of God? Where the love of God above all? Where are our thoughts? Where our desires? Where our affections? Are they in the right place, or are they in the wrong, and altogether out of gear? Small wonder that the all-holy, perfect, and jealous God should smite the imagination with terror of this state by declaring it to be to Himself so nauseous—so utterly repulsive to His Holiness—that at any time the lukewarm soul may be cast forth from His bosom, as being to Him no longer bearable.

I. I will have a clear understanding of the frightful evils and the awful risks of tepidity by making myself familiar with its signs.

1. The first sign of tepidity—a disinclination for spiritual things: a most dangerous symptom of spiritual disorder. There is our Blessed Lord in the tabernacle, but the tepid soul has no special liking for the quiet of the Sanctuary, no strong tendency to the Fountain of Light and Love; somehow it has no appetite for Divine things. It does not like mental prayer. It does not enjoy spiritual books. It has never yet worked up an interest in studying the principles

of spirituality, and the ways of spiritual life. A young professed Religious once spoke of such things as "spiritual bombast;" but one day he left the monastery, and never returned to it again. Such souls are on an inclined plane, and their acts make their habits. With the disrelish for Divine things they have a corresponding relish for the things of the world and the flesh, and thus their imperfect habits lead them on, to the gradual dwindling of their spiritual life; and how they will finish, who shall say? Can it be expected that they will be fit to enter the precincts of the heavenly courts, when here below they had little or no taste for Divine things?

2. Second sign of tepidity—neglecting to *do* the daily works appertaining to state and office. Things are left undone. There's a liking to get out of them, missing them, shirking them, getting out of Mass, or serving it, missing office, meditation not done, and glad to get out of it, or going through it lolling, sleeping, no book, no preparation, no pains about it, no real spirit in it, no zest, nothing like preference for Divine things, and a loving to do them with a full and ardent spirit. Of course other things are done instead, and plenty of time, energy, and interest given to them—newspapers, novels, sports, parties, games, dinners, smoking, and gadding about. Thus it is that nature gains and grace loses, and we are creatures of habit, and our

acts make our habits. Other things, too, are left undone. The care of the Church and Sacristy, and even the Altars, so often bespeaks neglect ; the care of souls also, and the care of the material things of the house too. We are wanting in principle. Grace is drawn down by nature. All this is the outcome of tepidity.

3. The third sign. A careless and spiritless way of going through things, showing a manifest want of interest in them. Fancy having no interest in the service of God ! Yet, alas ! too often this lack of spirit and interest is visible in the midst of spiritual and Divine things. How can it be accounted for ? Of course the heart is elsewhere. Such souls are found spending their time in things just according to nature—in much idle reading, for which occasions nowadays abound, in the daily floods of light literature around us. Habits of sporting, smoking, bicycling become second natures, and awaken keen and constant interest ; not that they may not be used for good purposes, and become referable *ad finem*, but that getting into the very heart's life they dull its interest in higher things, consuming the time and energies that are so limited, so that practically grace is ousted by nature, and the result is, as S. Bernard says, that spirituality is in books, and not in men.¹ Hence, *operatio sequitur esse*. The spirit is not

¹ " Ubi forma hæc ? in libris cernimus eam, sed non in viris " (*in Vita S. Malach.*).

set upon Divine realities, and operations follow accordingly. From a fervent spirit fervent thoughts, words, and acts go forth. From a spirit cold in Divine things what can be expected? "Be zealous, therefore, and do penance,"¹ are our Lord's own words to the tepid soul. Kindle the higher love into zeal, and mortify the natural man.

4. Fourth sign. The lack of self-training in spiritual life. *Rem acu tetigisti*, might be said here. Men train themselves to be lawyers, doctors, and statesmen. Why are we not as wise as they? Seneca speaks of those "who pass in the world like straws upon a river; they do not go, but they are carried. They live without design, they think on parts of life, but not upon the whole. How shall a man take his aim without a mark? He is a rash seaman who never considers what course he steers, but runs at a venture, as if he would brave the rocks."² We want design in life; our end, and the way to advance to it, ought to be clear. The principle of spiritual life, and the grasp of it, and the self-discipline to use it, and act by it loyally and consistently—all this would be the making of our life, and the great guarantee against tepidity, because it gives us a life-long interest, and implies a constant self-culture. But having no distinct project of life in hand, souls "live,

¹ Apoc. 3. 19.

² Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, and Epist. 18. 21.

as it were, by chance, and run about after strange things for novelty, not profit, and the very agitation hurts them. They are never quiet.”¹ From want of principle, training, formation, and settled make, they lapse into unruly ways, and their hearts become dull and dry to Divine things, and they are found habitually going through them in a listless, spiritless way, the chief characteristic of tepidity. When left to themselves, away from superiors, they have no fixed principle of life to keep them, and move them to regulate their manners, and as they are not given to train themselves, they become—

“The sport of every random gust.”

They ought to change, grow, strengthen, and develop in spirit: but they haven’t trained themselves to the work, so they lapse upon their multiplied activities and perversities, and never get out of their imperfect ways. Lacking the perfecting principle of love, they have never enjoyed a fervent spiritual life, and if they are not fervent, and yet not cold, they are bound to be tepid.

5. Fifth sign. A disregard for the ordinary graces of our state. The graces of religious life, and priestly life are something special and constant. There is the dedication to God. The Religious belongs to God, and the Priest belongs to God, and both ought to be men of God. As our Lord says, “I have chosen you, and placed

¹ Seneca, *De Vita Beati*, and Epist. 18, 21.

you, that you should go and bring forth fruit.”¹ Called to the state, we are called to the duties of the state ;² and to every duty done is attached a grace. Now a tepid soul doesn’t see all this. It just asks what it is *bound* to, and then likes the liberty of taking its own way : striving to discover the minimum of obligation consistent with an easy conscience. All this is very risky where eternal interests are at stake. People of the world don’t act so. The instinct both of reason and love is to do the best we can for ourselves. And why should we not do the best we can for God ? If we are scanty with Him, can we expect Him to be generous with us ? “He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly.”³ To take a stand, and say, “I’ll do nothing more than I am bound to,” is sowing about as sparingly as could be well imagined. What sort of love will such a soul really have for God ? if it wants to measure its obligations by what it is *bound* to, let it begin with the obligation of loving God with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and see how it proposes to carry out this law of love. The principle of love is *the* great remedy against tepidity. Souls are tepid because their love is cool. If we were, from our hearts, “all for God,” we should see that our vows, and our rules, and all the duties of daily

¹ S. John 15. 16.

² “Quilibet tenetur servare spectantia ad statum suum.”

³ 2 Cor. 9. 6.

life, down to the smallest, were our appointed means of advancing in the way of love, and the instruments of our perfection—and as perfection is a work to be done, we should say, “as I undertake the work, I want the means”—and so much should we value the means that we should not reconcile ourselves to the loss of the smallest: because we should say that to each little means, even to the smallest rule or duty, is attached a grace, and an increase of love; and we should be unwilling to give up the smallest atom of grace and love. This is to be as a wise merchant, ever intent on increasing his gains. Now it is a marked sign of tepidity when a soul ignores or heedlessly forgets all these riches of grace that surround its path, and takes little or no care to recognise and use them; sottishly confining its efforts to what it ignorantly and ignominiously fancies is enough by legal obligation, and having no thought of heartfelt love and generosity with God. Its condition is described by Horace—

“Magnas inter opes inops.”

And this accords with our Lord’s words, “Thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”¹

6. Sixth sign. Heedlessness and indifference to the correction of faults, and of tepidity itself,

¹ Apoc. 3. 17.

being admonished, and well aware of them. The heedless spirit is of the essence of tepidity. Indolence is closely connected with it; and a disinclination to examine much into them. Such conditions, however, become aggravated, when a soul clearly adverts to its own state, from instructions and corrections given, and yet continues in its indifference, as though the canker of heedlessness had eaten its way into the very spirit. It is clear that if the pruning-knife of mortification is not applied, and the principle of love grasped, tepidity, settling as a habit in the soul, will become as a second nature. Hence, our Lord's admonition, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold, fire-tried"¹—viz. the gold of love, sought and obtained through effort and self-denial—and in this love, the soul must be "zealous, and do penance":² that is, fervent, and mortified. All this is difficult to a tepid soul, because it is incompatible with tepidity. Thus, the remedy for tepidity is not to be tepid: and the proximate principle of the remedy is the higher love of God, and the living and working by it.

II. I will consider the remedies of tepidity, and resolve to use them; whether to hinder the spread of the evil at its commencement, or to arrest its development—seeing the danger that it is to spiritual life. Its remedies are reduced (1) to thought; (2) to heart.

¹ Apoc. 3. 18.

² Ibid. 19.

1. Want of thought is responsible for much tepidity. Evil is wrought by want of thought. *Quomodo obscuratum est aurum.* How is the gold tarnished. A glass, a watch, a dress often gets discoloured for want of thought and attention. A mill, an engine, a railway line—what an amount of thought they all require to keep them in good condition. Cows, and sheep, and poultry, if not thought of, will soon get disordered and unhealthy, and mischievous. Now, observe what care the owners and the managers of these various departments have; they are generally models of thought and care. Look at the railway line—what inspection, what examination, what attention, what care, what method, what system, are employed, are given, are kept up, because the work is important, because it is paying, because so much depends upon it, because life is in jeopardy if the things are not done.

The application of all this is clear. Is not our spiritual life with God important? Is it not paying? Does not much, does not everything depend upon it? Do we consider such a work as we should? Do we give our best thought and attention to it? Have we method, have we system about it? Are we alive to the tremendous consequences hanging upon it? If we seldom or never open our eyes to the reality of the business between ourselves and God—realise it, attend to it, look into it, and have a constant

interest in, and care for it, are we not very responsible for the dangers that will ensue—dangers indeed that come from want of thought? But we are bound to think about important things that are committed to our care. Five of the ten virgins “slumbered and slept.” They were not prepared. They were not on the watch; they gave not their thoughts to their work. Hence, *cogitavi vias meas*—I have thought on my ways. Our way is to God—the way of love, the way of perfection. We must equip ourselves, we must get strong, we must change, we must develop, we must go from virtue to virtue and from height to height. All this presupposes thought, attention, interest, design, aim, progress. Now, tepidity is indolent, and the reverse of all these. The determination, therefore, to *think*—think of God, His love, His will, His service; of the work to be done, hindrances and helps to doing it; the throwing of life into design, in view to the work of perfection; the study of this perfection, and all things in life concerned with it; attention to principle, and to duty, and the reference of all to the ultimate end—all this means *thought*. And it is the want of this thought that is the bane of tepidity. Therefore, serious thought in reference to God, and the things of God, is the first remedy to this dangerous condition of soul.

2. The second remedy to tepidity is *heart*. It is the specific remedy. A soul is tepid because

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its love is cold. Will a splendid engine go without a fire? Neither will you, however splendid you may be, go to God without love. Water gets cold when it is taken off the fire, so our lives become tepid if the fire of God's love is not well kept up within us. But the difficulty is to rouse an indolent soul to love. It must therefore *think*. It is difficult to rouse it to think. Will it look at our Lord's words, and rouse itself? "Be zealous and do penance"¹—that is, rouse yourself to love, and mortify the rest. Think of God's greatness, beauty, love; of our Blessed Lord's nearness to us; of our association with our Blessed Lady, the Angels, and Saints; of all the dear God does for us in nature, grace, and glory. Then go to Him, go to our Lord in the tabernacle, and praise, thank, and love Him, with all the angels and saints. Remember love is preference. Therefore, deliberately choose the Infinite God, and the Fountain of all Good, and make distinct *acts* of love. Then seize upon the principle of love within the heart, and make it go, work it, let it animate your duties and actions, and so get to the life of mutual love between yourself and God. On the other hand, give creatures their dismissal, sacrifice them, renounce them. The love of God will not become fervent, unless you sacrifice lower loves—"Return, transgressors, to the heart."² No one is so nearly and intimately related to us

¹ Apoc. 3. 19.² Isaias 46. 8.

as God Himself, nor can any creature-love compare with His. Choose Him, therefore—give yourself to Him, live the life of love with Him, do everything to please Him—and thus let your spiritual manhood develop. If you don't secure this higher love, you will go on in tepidity to old age, losing rank before God and men, and all the joy, alacrity, sweetness, and full-heartedness that only loving souls know. "Show me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths."¹

¹ Ps. 24. 4.

IX

THE FORMATION OF HABITS

As we are all creatures of habit, and as habits of some sort *will* be forming, it is vastly necessary, in our own interests, to advert to these laws of nature, to see how they work, and so to train ourselves to right habits, and avoid getting into wrong ones. Nature teaches us how forms are changed by repetition of act ; as Ovid says, *Gutta cavat lapidem*—a few drops of water will not hollow the stone ; but if the water is perpetually dropping, in course of time the stone changes shape, and at length is hollowed out. This is very observable in mountain regions where the great watercourses descend the mountain sides, and by ever following the same lines mark their indelible features on the giant form.

Coming to ourselves, you will observe the laws of human nature. Each one has more or less his formed ways and habits, some for better, and some for worse. Those who are older are more fixed in their habits than those who are younger. Naturally, because the water has been coursing on them for longer, and so made its impressions. The young hardly advert to the

formation of habit, although it is going on within them. It is part of education and training to choose proper habits from the first, and to avoid bad habits. But let us know the simple laws on which all this proceeds, based as they are upon the general laws of nature.

Good and bad habits are formed and unformed in exactly the same way. A few acts interrupted and arrested will not form a habit. But a continued repetition of the same act gradually makes an impression within, changing so far our inner form, and if kept up and carried on will result in the formed habit. The habit then becomes the principle of renewed acts, flowing forth easily and pleasurably, and by such formed habits a man's character is determined. Thus if any one wills to become a musician, it is a matter of forming the musical habit in his nature. A few acts and a little practice will not do this. The young aspirant proceeds with some difficulty; if he gets discouraged he may throw up his practice, and never get to the formed art. But if he is in earnest, if his heart is in his work, he proceeds day by day. His first difficulties are soon mastered, and he advances to further endeavours. New difficulties arise. Is he daunted by them? Not so, because he aims high; he means to go on; he says, "*I will be a musician.*" You observe he looks to the end. He takes his aim. He knows distinctly what he wants, and he

works consistently and perseveringly in order to the end. All his earlier difficulties have vanished, and he gradually becomes master of his art. His music is now part of himself. It is a developed quality or habit of his nature, and he produces its corresponding acts at any time with readiness, ease, and pleasure.

In precisely the same way bad habits are contracted. Two or three bad acts once in a way are not sufficient to form the habit, but a habit is formed by repetition of act; so it may be unformed by cessation of act. If a musician discontinues his practice he loses his music. Hence the need of stopping bad acts to hinder the bad habit forming. *Obsta principiis*. Resist the evil in the beginning; nip it in the bud; and the habit is stopped in the making.

I. As acts make habits, and habits make the character, I will at once choose the proper habits of spiritual and religious (and priestly) life, and study their formation by the corresponding acts.

Let us here notice how vastly important it is to begin in early years the formation of right habits, both natural and spiritual: for as a tree is easily bent when it is young, but not easily afterwards, so youth is the time for forming and shaping ourselves. Hence the sentence of the wise man, "The things thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy

old age ? ”¹ As S. Bonaventura says, “The form a man first takes he hardly changes ; and he who neglects discipline in his youth, with difficulty takes it in after years.”² Yet of course “it is never too late to mend.” It is only admitted to be *difficult* to change in later years. But with will power and Divine grace the work may be done.

“Not that is first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; afterwards that which is spiritual.”³ This tells us that we must look first to *natural* good habits, and *natural* virtues. Grace is grafted upon nature, and God is the God of nature as well as of grace. Therefore each one must make the very best he can of his nature. You know the difference if you graft on a wild tree or on a good one. So if the life of grace is on a wild nature, it is very different to its being on a cultured nature. Now you are a Religious (or a Priest) ; remember that the Religious is grafted on the man : and the Priest is grafted on the man : and your spiritual life is grafted on your natural life. Hence, what is the condition of your nature ? Have you looked to it well ? Do you cultivate it ? Do you improve it ? Do you train it ? Do you prune it of its wild growths ? Much of your spirituality, and much of the fruits of your life will depend on the condition of your natural man. If you are naturally indolent, naturally untidy, naturally

¹ Eccclus. 25. 5. ² *Spec. discipl. Præf.* ³ 1 Cor. 15. 46.

unpunctual, naturally self-indulgent, who does not see how vastly his spiritual life and his religious and priestly duties will suffer from all this ?

Let every one beware of neglecting to remedy his known defects. Once upon a time the screw of a garden gate was loose. No one attended to it. It became looser ; then it fell out. But the gardener was a *laissez faire* man, of careless and indolent nature. Anyhow the latch fell off, and the gate was allowed to close itself. It sometimes stayed open a little, then a little more. Once or twice it was left wide open, then carelessly shut, then heedlessly open again. The whole of one night it was open. What happened ? A herd of wild cattle rushed through it, trampled all over the garden, destroyed the flowers, fruits, and conservatories, and left the garden a ruin. And all this came from not attending to a loose screw !

A minimis incipitur. We begin with small things and come to greater. Many there are who see their faults, and have not the will to mend them. One thing leads on to another, and acts make habits. Thus it is that careless souls neglect small things, and gradually proceed to greater. *Facilis descensus.* Before long all is gone. "History is full of ruins."

II. Take now some of the natural virtues and make them your own during this retreat, in view of acting on them habitually through life.

Resolve to train yourself to this, that from acts they may pass into habits.

1. Determine to be a man of principle—

“I dare do all that may become a man—

When you durst do it, then you are a man—

And to be more than what you are, you would

Be so much more the man.”

Always dare to be a man of principle, by rectitude of mind and heart. The love of God and man is the true principle of life. We are not to act upon impulse, passion, indolence, or mere self-seeking. The love of God and of man should move, stir, urge us. There is always work to be done for God and man.

2. *Train yourself* through life : not for a time only, but right up to the end of life. To be a man of principle you will need self-governance, discipline, formation—all this supposes that you train yourself. Some seem never to care to form themselves well. If they like things they do them, and if they don't, they neglect them. What sort of principle is this? They soon become cantankerous; and who likes them then? They want *un*forming and *re*forming. But for this they need *will-power*. Do they *will* to change? Don't blink the question. Each one might, could, and should form, educate, improve, and develop his natural powers. Look at the vocalists, and pianists, and actresses, and see how they train themselves. Acts make habits,

and practice makes perfect. What they do in their state of life we might do in ours. Where there is a will there is a way. Have the *will* to train yourself.

3. Cleanliness, as next to godliness, is a natural virtue to be cultivated through life. It is a duty to ourselves, and to society. Some are naturally tidy, and some very untidy; both these tendencies very soon grow into habits, and are observable, one way or the other, to our advantage or disadvantage; and others follow us, and small things lead to greater—negligence, heedlessness, indolence, follow in the wake. It is the little rift within the lute, that must be seen to at once. We should be as careful of ourselves as we are of any musical instrument, and keep everything clean and in good condition for God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

4. Temperance is a natural habit, easily formed with will-power and self-discipline and principle; but where these are lacking, nature is soon found to be down-drawing to the spirit. Is it not a pity, looking to our best interests and to the spirit of our state, to be creating for ourselves a number of little wants that we should be much better without? To indulge a propensity is to strengthen it. By a little management any one may train himself to strict moderation in eating and drinking. How excellent it is to accustom oneself to live without need of stimulating drink. To take it occa-

sionally is much better than to take it habitually. If used habitually, it gets into the blood, and from thence into the complexion. Who likes to see this in a religious, and in a priest? The world is very observant here, and the laws of nature are inexorable. If the tendency this way is felt, why not nip it in the bud? It grows apace. The use of it strengthens the tendency. The want is created. The habit grows with repetition of act, and, once formed, the acts multiply. Then comes the craving. Alas! for want of self-training, discipline, and principle. And the soul becomes a slave. And the flesh goes up, and the spirit goes down. The intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers deteriorate as the relish for the coarse pleasures of sense gets the ascendancy. The pity is not to see, and not to think in time. And difficult it will be to unform the habit; though where there is a will there is a way. And in all this, other imperfect habits follow in the train; smoking goes to excess, being a merely created want; card-playing, silly-song-singing, and much idle talking and gaming run away with valuable time, and neutralise or nullify the taste for higher and Divine things.

5. Punctuality is a natural virtue to cultivate. In religious life it has much to do with the spirit and discipline of the community. The sound of the bell is as the voice of the Master, and no one can be indifferent to this. In priestly life

it is a matter of principle to be punctual—in the services of the church, the Holy Mass, the Confessional, attendance to the sick, to the schools, and to all appointments made. The love of God and the love of souls should ever be the priest's moving principle. If this be so, as soon as the duty is due, love prompts us to move. *Caritas Christi urget nos.*

III. As spiritual habits are formed and gradually developed like natural habits by repetition of the corresponding act, and as all virtues are rooted in love, it will be wise to seize upon the habit of Divine charity in the soul, and make it become our moving principle, God and the soul thus living and working together.

If we cultivate natural habits so carefully, why should we not cultivate spiritual habits? How industrious the artists and musicians are, how full of interest the builders and farmers. Why ever cannot we do for God what they do for creatures? Why not have the same care for heavenly things that they have for earthly? Their natural love spurs them on. They love themselves. They love their wives and families. They love society. They love science, art, and pleasure. Love is their moving principle. It is the spring of their life and actions. They have no need to argue about their love of these things; they have it, and enjoy it. Now here is the unanswerable argument. If they do all this for love of worldly gain and natural pleasure, why

cannot we do the like for the sake of heavenly gain, and for the love of God above all things? Yet when it comes to this we have to argue, to try to persuade, to work hard, to awaken a little spark of Divine love! but for human love no argument is needed. Alas! what does it show? It shows that the habits of creature-loves are strongly developed in us, and consequently that they spring into act, day by day, with ease and pleasure, whereas the love of Divine things with difficulty comes forth, because the habit thereof has not been formed. How long shall we go on like this? Is not this retreat the time of conversion to God? Must we not choose Him? But what is our condition if we only go to Him with difficulty? O dear Lord God, and who is like to Thee? And all else comes from Thee. The creatures that I love come from Thee. Yet I go to them, and leave Thee! "Be converted to Me, with all your heart, saith the Lord." "If with *all your hearts* ye truly seek Me, ye shall surely find Me."

Habits of some sort I have: therefore I will have the highest of all. Come, thou habit of Divine love, I will have *thee* above all. Already thou art planted in my soul by the theological virtue of charity—the root, the mother, and the fountain of all virtues.¹ But the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed. So

¹ "Caritas radix est, fons, materque cunctorum bonorum" (S. Joan. Chrys., *Hom. 2 die Pent.*)

the love of God is in its germ within our souls. But there it is, awaiting its growth, development, and perfection. Still, the soul is even now, by its inner life of love, in contact with the Spirit of God. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."¹ As the seed grows by care and cultivation, so the Divine love strengthens and expands by use and exercise, and the other virtues spread from it like branches from the tree.²

Now this Divine virtue is a habit—and the habit of habits—for the other virtues are habits, too, but rooted in the habit of love. Look, therefore, to the root; and the branches, flowers, leaves, and fruits will all come forth in due season. Let the love of God be your animating spirit; your moving power. It becomes the principle of life. It moves you to action in a thousand different ways. It "spurs us on to great things, and makes all that is bitter sweet and savoury."³ Finally, it is the perfecting principle, spreading its influence through all the powers of soul and body, subduing all to the guidance and governance of the Spirit of God.

¹ Rom. 5. 5.

² 1 Cor. 13. 4-7.

³ "Imit.," 3. 5.

X

THE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

AMPLIUS lava me. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Much time is given to bodily washing, for the sake of comfort, and appearance, and of course, health. People study their complexion, and cannot endure a spot on the face. They cleanse their house thoroughly, and make their rooms neat. Plates, dishes, windows, clothes, and shoes are all well purified and brightened. So much for the lower wants of our nature. They are well considered; well attended to. The habit is formed and acted upon through life—it is quite second nature; quite understood: those who neglect cleanliness rue the consequences.

But now, what about the Divine portion of our being—that which God and the angels see? Is the mind kept clean? Is the heart pure? Is the memory untarnished? Is the imagination well cleansed? These powers are all very active, very easily sullied and stained; they are constantly at work, and very susceptible to surroundings, and encased as they are in a body of flesh, they are necessarily encountered by the

laws of the flesh ; and the flesh and spirit together being in the world, we may say that the world is also in them ; and the devil is in the world too, and very active indeed among the children of men. All this is enough to explain how very easily the inner powers of the soul are affected by the wants of the flesh, the ways of the world, and the wiles of the devil. The need, therefore, of spiritual purification is evidently great, and constant too, and with all our care for material cleanliness as next to godliness, certainly we ought in all consistency to have equal care in the cleansing of our souls ; and this more especially considering that we are made for God, that we belong to Him, that the soul of man is His “homeliest home” on earth, and therefore ought to be bright and fair ; and, finally, that we shall never be fit for union with Him in heaven, till the work of our purification is complete.

I. The Sacrament of Penance is our Lord's appointed means of cleansing us from sin. It is the fountain of the precious blood flowing on the soul. Our Lord Himself pours it on us, for He it is who absolves, as it is He who baptizes, and He who consecrates. A sinner, therefore, first turns from sin, then turns to God with love and contrition. And how wonderfully loving is our Lord God towards a soul returning to Him. We have it in the prodigal son. See the vastly tender love of the Father ; how he rejoices to

have his child again, ungrateful and erring though he has been, and though his brethren and those around be not forgiving, yet the loving Father is forgiving; and he who has done so wrong is reinstated in the Father's favour, in his family and home. Look again at Magdalen, turning to our Lord with simple love; and see the readiness, condescension, and gentle love of our Lord in receiving and absolving her. These examples from the Gospel tell us of God's mercy "from generation to generation," and how His "mercy is over all His works."

Most thoughtful, tender, and generous has our Lord been in the Sacrament of Penance. When the burden of sin is on the conscience there is the wish in nature to unburden it; and our Lord utilises this, and founds His Sacrament of forgiveness upon it, and with it comes the peace that a stricken conscience so craves for. This is the first fruit of the Sacrament of Penance—peace of soul. It follows in the nature of the case, through reconciliation with God. Sweet life of love and peace with God. Let its instinct ever be, never to offend again the one we love.

The second fruit of the Sacrament of Penance is purity of soul. The pouring of the precious blood is the soul's purification. Its former sins belong to it no more. God is the God of the present. He does not consider what a soul has been, but what it is now. Yet, even when it is

purified, how soon it contracts fresh stains. But the fountains of the precious blood are flowing all through the Church. *Amplius lava me.* And again and again, and all through life our Lord is ready to cleanse us ; and perpetually, night and day, throughout the Church, are the streams of His precious blood pouring on the souls of men.

The third fruit of the Sacrament of Penance is renewed strength of soul. As a soul weakens through repeated falls, so it strengthens as it rises. It falls through human weakness, but it rises in Divine strength. It falls by nature, it rises by grace. The life of grace and love within no doubt requires constant care and attention. It is not meant to be stagnant and stationary. It has to grow, to strengthen, to progress. Every new addition to grace strengthens it. Of course nature is there, and is so often down-drawing. But life is a warfare. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" And our Lord is so near us, ever in our midst, in His world invisible, in His wondrous sacramental system, in His Sacrificial and Sacramental Life ; thus we are constantly receiving fresh accessions of life and strength. Let us not forget that acts make habits. We want the habit of spiritual strength. We must keep it, use it, exercise it, and when fresh temptation comes, we must fight it straight out. Thus it is that the effects of the Sacrament of Penance are maintained.

II. When souls have never any will for grave

sin, but live habitually in grace and love, striving further against venial sins, wishing more and more to be "all for God," they may purify their souls from smaller faults and frailties by going straight to God, the ever-flowing Fountain, and cleanse themselves in His living waters.

We must understand well that love itself is a purifying principle. Hence our Lord's words of Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much." The reason of this is that real love is incompatible with sin. When sin is done, love is so far departed from, and self-love supplants Divine love. If, then, a soul goes straight to God by choice, preference, and inmost love, it thereby leaves its sin, and love as a fire, consumes it. "Our God is a consuming fire."¹

The particular advantages of thus managing our habitual failings and frailties are manifold and manifest. (1) The going straight to God makes at once for our spiritual progress, for there is no progress like progressing, and no better progress than going straight to the end. But love is the direct way to God, and is indeed, even now, union with God; and that is our "all." (2) As acts strengthen habits, so acts of love strengthen the habit of love, and finally develop a loving soul; and this is our beatitude here and hereafter too. (3) The going straight to God, by the transcension of faults and frailties,

¹ Heb. 12. 29.

or the going to Him, as an old spiritual writer puts it, "over hedges and ditches," makes a courageous soul; and as S. Teresa says, "our Lord is fond of courageous souls." For thorough good spiritual progress we want loving and courageous souls. (4) The looking to God instead of looking at ourselves is admitted by eminent spiritual writers to be the best way of managing our venial sins. Thus Blossius writes: "Truly we have a more immediate remedy against lesser sins when we turn to God by a sweet affection of love than when we dwell upon the sins themselves."¹ Surius says, "Venial sins are far more easily, efficaciously, and perfectly effaced, by a loving and fervent conversion to God than by looking at the sins themselves, even with contrition. But this is a hidden exercise known but to a few and little used." The same words are also found in Harphius.² S. Teresa also tells us that "by dwelling continually on our misery the stream will never run clear, on account of the mud of fears and cowardice which arise."³ And Walter Hilton: "Whensoever thou risest against sin, set the point of thy thoughts upon God rather than upon the sin. If thou do so God fighteth for thee, and will destroy sin in thee."⁴ On this passage, Mother Frances Raphael Drane says, "I think

¹ *Spec. Monac.*, c. 5, and *Canon. Vitæ Sp.*, c. 3.

² See also Cassian. Conf. 19.

³ "Int. Castle," M. 1., c. 2.

⁴ "Scale of Perf."

that quite perfect, and it seems to contain what nine souls out of ten nowadays are most in want of—the going to God, instead of the everlasting scraping away at oneself, which is never a whit the better for all the scraping.”¹

III. There is yet a third degree of inner purification to which all well-willed souls may look forward, and which we may strive to carry out little by little as we progress in the life of love, which moves us to rid ourselves of all opposing elements, even the least, to God’s designs within us.

Chief among these “miseries,” as S. Francis of Sales would say, we will reckon these three: (1) idle thoughts, (2) useless desires, (3) needless anxieties. The conflict with these will be more or less lifelong, but it is well to know them, to see them, to make no truce with them, to grapple with them, and determine to bring them under management.

1. Idle thoughts. Abbot Moses compares man’s mind to a mill, perpetually revolving. Work on and on it will. But the mill grinds what is put into it—corn or chaff. Now what are you putting into your mind? It is perfectly amazing to see the amount of chaff we put in, and time goes by—days, weeks, months, years—and there is the chaff, and the grind, grind. Take a day, take an hour, or five minutes—see it. What strange fancies, what funny

¹ “Memoir,” p. 199.

notions, what perpetual images set up and knocked down, what castles in the air, what futile broodings, what senseless imaginations—and time and life are going. When will you rise up, and play the man? Much of all this strange activity is amenable to management. How may it be done? First, every one must have an ideal for his life. We are going to God; the work of perfection must be done, therefore our life must be according to the spirit, not according to the flesh. In such a work we want design, plan, and distinct aim. Have this clearly settled in the mind; then your thoughts, studies, desires, aspirations, and works must be arranged in reference to the end. Each one will have to train himself to this, and keep up his training, like the pianists and vocalists. Interest, energy, determination, discipline, will all be needed here. Cowards will not do in the service of God. We must be “set upon realities,” as Newman said of Palmer. If we are, then our thoughts are laid under contribution; as the “Imitation” says, “there I am where my thought is, and there is my thought where that is which I love. If I love heaven, I think of heavenly things; if I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.”¹ This is the law of nature, that we think of what we love. Let us be whole-hearted with God and Divine things, and our thoughts will follow our hearts.

¹ “Imit.,” B. 3., c. 48.

2. Useless desires. "Leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest"—a well-known sentence of the "Imitation."¹ Our desires are but another phase of our thoughts. We want to please, to amuse, to gratify ourselves in a thousand different ways; the want is the desire, and the mill of the mind is at once set turning. We think of what we want, we feed upon it, we spend time in thinking and desiring. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."² In the spiritual sense idols are taken to signify any objects, whether persons or things, which stand constantly in the mind and heart, and to which thoughts, desires, and affections go, independently of the love and service of God. Sometimes this runs on into passion, as when the image is so fixed in the mind, and so fondly kept there that one says, "I can't help it." This is a case of acts making impressions and habits. Any soul having the real main work of life well in hand, and aiming at becoming "all for God," will see by the instinct of love that these creature-images somehow stand up in the temple of the soul; and whereas a true lover of God would smash them, as *impeditiva* to its life of love, others want them and keep them. Here see the activity of thoughts and desires, and how much a soul becomes engaged with them.

Another and a common way in which useless desires play their game is to be engaging on

¹ "Imit.," c. 32.

² 1 John 5., *ult.*

future fancies instead of attending to present duties. God is the God of the present, and His will to be done is the duty of this day and hour. Why do we not give our full attention and interest to the work of the present, so as to do it for God, and do it well? *Age quod agis*—attend to what you are about. This thing can only be done once. How sad to make all our actions imperfect because our thoughts and hearts are not in what we are about, but roving in strange desires of a fanciful future. And another branch of the same activity of the desire is a constant disposition to *hurry* over what we are about in order to get on to something else. Many are found hurrying over choir duties, to get into outer works and recreation, or hurrying over prayers, to get to breakfast. The prayers of the Mass and office are so hastily got through as *not* to be got through, but cut and clipped; and all because of wild desire. "Leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest." "Let us purify our souls," says Seneca, "otherwise we shall be slaves to accidents, either craving or fearing. Desire and fear are at the root of all our miseries."¹

3. Needless anxieties. Either "craving or fearing," as Seneca says. Many are over-anxious about their faults, and get into what has been called an "everlasting scraping away at oneself." Repeated acts of this sort rapidly

¹ Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, c. 4, and Epis. 10.

go to form the corresponding habit, and the habit becomes the spring of fresh acts, and the net result is that the mind gets filled with images of sin and self, and "dwelling in its mournful lurking-holes," instead of rising to the light of Divine contemplation. S. Teresa tells us that our Lord is fond of courageous souls; and here it is that we must be at once loving and courageous. Remember that love itself is a purifying principle, and the imperfections of the soul are quickly lost in love, like mould on metal is lost in fire.¹ To accomplish this, however, quite effectually, no doubt, as Fr. Baker says, we should "get out of the habitation of nature." As the "Imitation" repeatedly says, "Leave thyself." It is by the pourings of the Divine light and love in upon the soul that all these miseries of nature are suffocated; and then it is that the natural is superseded by the Divine life. "The kingdom of God is within you," therefore God must reign within, and have all our powers subdued to Him; nor must we be tyrannised over by inane doubts, fears, or scruples. "Woe to you that put darkness for light, and light for darkness."² The least motion troubles the fountain, and interferes with the sun's brightness within it; so our dark activities hinder the shinings of the Divine light and love within the soul. This is why we have to labour constantly at the purification of the soul, that being rid of

¹ From S. John of the Cross.

² Isaiah 5. 20.

all opposing elements our Lord may make His abode within us. Yet the work is more His than ours. Therefore let us think of Him, and He will think of us. Let us give ourselves to Him, and He will give Himself to us. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." ¹

¹ S. Matt. 5. 8.

XI

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

IF the plant ceases to grow, or the fruit to ripen, they will soon decay and perish. Year by year the flowers put forth new life; they bring us a message to make a new start, to try, and begin again. The world outside is a perpetual object-lesson of progress. Children at school get on day by day. Every man of business aims at improving his position. Look at all the inventions of art and science—what an amount of care, industry, hard work, courage, resolution, devotion, determination they show all round. A painter begins his picture, not to let it stand still and be unfinished, but to work at it, carry it on, improve, and finally perfect and finish it. And we ourselves labour to enhance our temporal commodities. We have a constant eye to improving our position; in clothes, food, books, furniture, we want better things. Then in intellectual cultivation we take care to progress; we are always adding to our stock of knowledge. Indeed progress is a law of life. Human institutions begin in a small way, and then advance and enlarge themselves. Greece and Rome were the outcome of gradual growth and development,

and so with the Church. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." All this is to tell us that we must do for spiritual things what we do for all the rest. We must get out of old thoughts and into new ones, out of old ways and into new ways. It is surely a fair question to ask ourselves whether we advance in the love of God as much as we do in secular knowledge, and whether we progress in prayer and mortification as much as in art or literature. The question is reduced to the more general one, Have we as much care for spiritual goods as we have for things temporal? It would not be pleasant to find our physique developing on one side and not on the other. Anything like one-sided growth, whether in a tree or an animal, or a human being, would be considered unfortunate. Therefore the question comes to us again, if we change, grow, strengthen, and develop physically, morally, civilly, intellectually, why do we not progress in the like way spiritually?

I. In view to spiritual progress I will consider what is the great essential of spiritual life, afterwards what is instrumental and accidental to it, in order to have design in the work, and progress in all together.

The essence of all spirituality is the life of charity or mutual love between the soul and God, by which God gives Himself to us, and we give ourselves to Him; by which He loves us,

and we love Him; He works with us, and we work with Him—this love of Him above all things overflowing in love to our neighbour. But at first, in this life of love, we are as children and weak beginners. The habit of charity in the beginner is like the seed to the tree, and like the child to the full-grown man. Time is needed, care, application, and interest, to form the habit and make it work promptly, easily, and sweetly. As already said it is like the beginner in music, who plays with difficulty till the musical habit is formed. And as the musician advances little by little by dint of practice, so a young soul, aspiring to the life of perfect love, begins by directing its thoughts and affections to God and divine things, choosing them, striving for them, preferring them, then making acts of love, then acting from the principle of love, then mortifying inordinate love, then training itself to see the beauty of God in all the beauties of nature and grace. And observing our Blessed Lord's immense love for us, one by one—in His Sacrificial and Sacramental Life, in His Church and in His sacramental system—then seeing the vast needs of souls all around us, and having the wish to help them—all this kindles the flames, the flames of love—love for God, and love for souls—and this is charity, this the essence of spirituality and perfection; and as the fire is stirred, it spreads, it gathers, it increases. And this is how the life of love progresses—the thought of these things moves

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the heart, and the heart bursts forth in renewed acts of charity, affective and effective, to God and to our neighbour. Then a soul seizes its principle of charity within, and delights in living and working there with the Holy Ghost Himself. "They who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."¹ The soul of man is God's "homeliest home" on earth, and the "Charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given us."² And as often as a soul thinks, speaks, and acts by this principle, so often does the Spirit of God work within it, and so often does it progress in the way of God, and in the way of spiritual life and perfection. Thus it is in the constant practice of love—and advances in the ways of love, like the musician advances in the ways of music—the constant use of the act forms the habit, and practice makes perfect.

II. The great essential of spiritual life and perfection being thus well understood, there are certain primary and indispensable means that are instrumental to it, which are prayer and mortification. These are charity's inseparable attendants through life, and as she advances to God, they advance with her. Therefore our spiritual progress lies in the ways of love, and in the ways of prayer and mortification with it.

I. One loving God above all things is necessarily a man of prayer, because prayer is simply the mutual intercourse between the soul and

¹ Rom. 8. 14.

² Rom. 5. 5.

God ; nor would there be true love without the constant tendency of those loving to enjoy one another's society and communicate of their good things one to the other. In the nature of the case, therefore, as love increases prayer increases, and as a soul progresses in the ways of love, it progresses in the ways of prayer. In its early years it seeks God by various methods of meditation. God wills to be sought, and He says, "Seek, and you shall find." Yet He wills to be sought with the whole heart. "If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall surely find Me!"¹ "This is the game of love," as Henry Suso tells us.² We must play our part well. It is no small thing for God to seek the hearts of His creatures. "My son, give me thy heart."³ But we shall have to advance further on in the ways of prayer before *finding* God within us. Meditation is admittedly a seeking of God, contemplation is the finding. Needless to say we seek in order to find, and so we start in the ways of meditation as we start on a journey ; the meaning of starting is to continue our advance till we reach the journey's end. So we use meditation in the earlier ways of spiritual life that it may awaken our faith and love, and familiarise us with Divine things in view of our knowing and loving them more and more ; and all this to help us to be more loving to God, to realise more His immense love for us, His presence around and within us, and our Lord's

¹ Jer. 29. 13. ² "Etern. Wisdom," c. 9. ³ Prov. 3. 26.

love for us, one by one, in His Incarnation, and its continuation in His Sacramental Life—the love we should have for Him in return ; for His blessed Mother, and our Mother, for the Angels and the Saints. It is to all these Divine things that we open our eyes in meditation, that we may see them, and know them, and feel them, and love them, and then understand that we have to get nearer and nearer to God, the giver of them all, and of all good things ; and to know that it is by love as a habit disposed to its acts, and coming into act in a thousand different ways, that we do get nearer and nearer to Him. And as our love grows we feel less in need of the formalities of meditation, and that is a sign that we are going forward to God. He draws by degrees a loving soul ; and in time of prayer such a one speaks to Him and loves Him at once, without need of preludes or points. This shows that the soul is advancing along the way, and pity it would be if it were sent back again into its former methods. It would be like going back on the road to start the journey again. We must go forward in the way of prayer. “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you !”¹ He goes forth to meet a loving soul. Many a light, and many a touch of love does He bestow where He finds the heart ready. God speaks, and the soul speaks. This is indeed progress at once in prayer and love, and as long as it lasts, there can be no need of books. It is called affective prayer, and it leads

¹ S. James 4. 8.

straight to the gate of contemplation. Who can estimate what the touch of the Spirit of God is to the soul? Isaias was touched by a seraph, and his soul was purified.¹ Jeremias was touched.² Daniel was touched by Gabriel. Our Lord touched the leper and cleansed him, and they brought little children that He might "touch them." Scarcely will a soul that has not been touched come to contemplation. Still, we may aspire to all this, knowing that "every best and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights";³ and we may well hope that if we remove impediments, our Lord will draw us on. Certainly, contemplation is the term of the way on which meditation sets out.

2. Mortification is the inseparable companion of prayer, and both work hand in hand, as the two handmaids of charity, for the perfection of her life and work. The union of the two is consequent on the union of spirit and flesh in our condition here below. Prayer lifts up the spirit, and mortification puts down the flesh; and as we advance in love, so we have to advance in prayer and in mortification.

The exercise of mortification is primarily and essentially in the interior, and in this sense is synonymous with self-denial. It is obvious that the observance of the commandments, of the laws of the Church, of our vows, and our rules, all imply a considerable amount of mortification. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are constant

¹ Isaias 6. 6. ² Jer. 1. 9. ³ S. Jas. 1. 17.

mortifications to the natural man, and the minute observances of regular life keep nature in perpetual check ; indeed the laws of society work in the same way, and a good deal of self-denial is required on their behalf. S. Thomas tells us that all our sins are rooted in self-love,¹ as all the virtues are rooted in charity. Hence, our scheme of mortification will be simplified by laying the axe to the root, grasping the Divine love, and by its virtue mortifying self-love. This means practically that we should act by the principle of charity, and have all the workings of natural love in subordination thereto. All this is the formation of a habit, and we get into it gradually by use and exercise.

III. The accidental portion of spiritual life is that which concerns the outer work and business of our daily duties. Thus it differs according to different states, abilities, and opportunities, and according to the office to which each one may be appointed. It is a matter, therefore, of applying our principles to our actions, of coming from theory to practice, of coming from words to things, and of coming strictly from the habit to the act. It is well admitted in philosophy that every power is for its proper act.² The eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, the hand for working, the foot for walking. So our great powers of intellect and will are for their proper operations. Therefore I must know God, therefore I must

¹ "Amor sui est causa omnis peccati" (1. 2. Q. 77, A. 4).

² "Quælibet res est propter suam operationem."

love Him ; and my love, being a spring of action, moves me to the works of life. Here, therefore, is lifelong scope for spiritual progress, and herein lies the arduous work of spiritual perfection. I must not only have the habit of Divine love as my spiritual life and principle, but it must work in accordance with its power. *Virtus est habitus operativus*. Every virtue is for action. And above all others, love is the great active and moving power in the world—natural love in the natural order, Divine love in the spiritual order. Hence, in a spiritual life, the love of God should be the animating and moving spirit of all our actions ; this is indeed why it is called spiritual life, because of the Spirit of God vivifying all. “They who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”¹ But who does not see what constancy of purpose, and what fidelity of soul are needed, before all our thoughts, words, and works are brought under the influence of the Spirit of God ? All this can but work on very gradually, like life itself ; and it tells us that we can never say the word “enough” in spiritual things, but that we always have to be progressing—“forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth to those that are before, I press towards the mark.”² Thus we learn that our spiritual progress has to be lifelong : that we never stop till we attain to God. “In everything much is lost if we do not advance.”³

¹ Rom. 8. 14.² Phil. 3. 12.³ S. Teresa.

XII

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

A TRUE religious life means a genuine and hearty dedication of ourselves and our lives to the love and service of God.¹ It implies a recognition and realisation of the Infinitely Great and Good God, the Fountain of all goodness, ever-flowing, overflowing, and of our Blessed Lord's love in coming to us, and dwelling among us; and of His plan in having certain souls whom He chooses, associated with Himself, for God's own great ends, and the vast needs of souls. Our Lord tells us that it is He, not we, who make the choice; that is, the first choice. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you;"² because when He has chosen us, we must certainly choose Him. God first loves us, then we love Him. He gives Himself to us, and we give ourselves to Him. He works with us, and we work with Him. This is the great reality, the life of mutual love between the soul and God.³

¹ "*Comparatio statûs Religiosi est sicut holocausti*" (2. 2. Q. 184, A. 8).

² S. John 15. 16.

³ "*Quædam amicitia hominis ad Deum, per quam homo Deum diligit, et Deus hominem; et sic efficitur quædam associatio hominis ad Deum*" (S. Thom. 3 Sen. D 27, Q. 2, A. 1).

Let us never lose sight of it. Externals are accidentals ; they come and go ; but the essential is ever within us, and thus our happiness is within.¹

Having thus chosen our Lord God, given ourselves to Him, and dedicated our lives to His love and service, we must be the *real thing*, and *no sham*. There are shams enough in the world, and we do not want them in religion. "Religion," says S. Bernard, "is not in the habit, but in the heart."² "You are called a religious ; see you are truly what you are called. Do the works of a religious. If you labour not for your perfection, you are no religious. For although you are not bound to be perfect, you are bound by your profession to strive for your perfection. Thus it is, and not otherwise."³

I. Religious life, being a dedication of ourselves to God, I will distinctly and voluntarily, during this Retreat, choose once more my Lord God, as the One, Great, and Only Good, to whom we all belong. And as love is preference, with my inmost heart I prefer Him to all things else, and I lovingly bind myself to Him anew by my vows and rules, leaving Him to use me in future for Himself or others according to His will.

If we do not get to something like this, we shall miss the mark. External observances, with-

¹ "Intrinsecus esse beatitudinem nostram" (S. Aug., *Serm., Dom. in Mont.*, L. 1. c. 5).

² *Apol. ad Gulielm.*, c. 10.

³ *Blosius, Spec. Monac.* c. 1.

out the inner life of love with God, are as shell without the kernel, or body without the soul. Does not S. Paul tell us that the grandest externals without charity are as a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal? Therefore let us go straight to the Divine reality, and be men of God. The very meaning of *religious* is the being *bound again* to God. As Christians we are bound to Him by the theological virtues; as religious we are bound anew by our vows; so that we have thus a twice-triple bond of union with God—the triple bond of the theological virtues, and the triple bond of the vows. The vows rest on the virtues: and if we are wanting in poverty, chastity, and obedience, it is because we are wanting in faith, hope, and charity.

It will help us in our life of dedication if we renew the oblation of ourselves to God, in union with our Lord, day by day in the Mass. This is the greatest act in the world, being our Lord's own oblation of Himself for the love of God and men. As He offers Himself, we offer ourselves with Him. In the Mass our Lord comes to us, and we go to Him. He loves us, and we love Him. He gives Himself to us, and we give ourselves to Him. He works with us, and we work with Him: and none of us go to God but through Him: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me."¹ "Abide in Me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide

¹ S. John 14. 6.

in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.”¹ These words bespeak the life of mutual love between the soul and God, and the fruitlessness of external doings apart from it. “It is the spirit that giveth life,”² and it is the interior spirit that is in contact with the Spirit of God.

All this being premised, we have to see that the love and preference of our hearts is well maintained; for it will avail nothing to begin, if we do not continue, and finish our work. Day by day we must go to God and give Him ourselves afresh. Our mental prayer is the appointed time for treating with Him. There He meets us, and we meet Him. He looks at us, and we look at Him. He thinks of us, and we think of Him. He speaks to us, and we speak to Him. It is love for our duties that gives us the spirit of our state, therefore we must love them, one and all—those that are interior between God and our souls, and those that are exterior in the service of our neighbour. And as love for God ever comes first, love for Divine things has the first place in the heart. Let us say it again that love is preference; and thus the “Imitation” says, “prefer the attendance on God before all external things.”³ Now in religion we are living in the midst of Divine things: the Holy Ghost,

¹ S. John 15. 4.

² Ibid. 6. 64.

³ B. 3, c. 53.

the soul of the Church and of every soul in grace ; our Blessed Lord's hidden sacramental presence ; the daily offering of the Mass throughout the world ; the whole sacramental system ; the Divine offices of the Church rising from earth to heaven night and day ; and God's presence all around and within us. All this our loving Lord God is ever carrying on for the children of men, and He wills us in religion to be associated in these Divine things with Himself, and to work with Him through them for the salvation of our brethren. Take care, therefore, not to flag in your love of God and the things of God ; love to find Him around and within you, love to think of the Holy Ghost in the Church, love to go to our Blessed Lord in His wonderful Sacramental Life, love to feel that He it is who washes your soul with His precious blood in the Sacrament of Penance, love the Holy Mass, as the greatest act in the world, love your nearness to our Lord in Holy Communion. Delight in the Divine offices of the Church as representing the praise and prayer of Holy Mother Church before heaven and earth, and prize most specially your time of mental prayer when you hold converse with our Lord God Himself. All these belong to the contemplative element of religious life, that part of it—the best part—which keeps the soul in its due relation to God. See that your heart is ever true to its centre, that it never slacks in its love

of Divine things. Love is preference, and our preference must be for the things of God. All this appertains to the essential spirit of religious life, to that which is the life and spirit of all the rest. We must be as true to it all as the needle to the north.

II. The three vows of religion are a triple bond binding us to God, in addition to the triple bond of the theological virtues. I must love them therefore as I love the bonds of friendship with God. They are essential to religious life, and instrumental to the life of love.¹ It is the love of what appertains to our state, and the acting accordingly, that gives us the spirit of our state.

1. Let me therefore love holy poverty. "Be poor in things, but poorer still in affection to things—poor in spirit. If you still love things with a selfish love, you are not truly poor; you cannot yet say, 'Behold, we have left all things.' Leave all things. Let not your heart cleave to anything. Be free from everything but God."² Thus it is that Blossius instructs us. We have to be poor in *things* by giving up superfluities, but poorer still in *affection* to things, by letting go our attachments, and forsaking our little idols. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."³ Keep your hearts free—free from attachments to, and even images of, creatures—that God may give you His light and love

¹ S. Thom., 2. 2. Q. 186, Art. 2.

² Blossius, *Spec. Monac. c. de Mortif.*

³ 1 John 5. *ult.*

instead. This is poverty of spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." By giving all, they find all. "Behold, we have left all things." "Leave all, and thou shalt find all."¹

2. We must love our chastity, because it binds us again to God. We are not to live without love, but we give up the natural for the divine, leaving human loves for the Divine love, and human lovers for the Divine Lover. We are dedicated to God in body as well as soul, and anything of unchastity, in thought, word, or deed, has no existence for consecrated souls. But real love vastly expands under chastity. Nothing so enlarges the heart as the love of God. We see Him all around and within us. We see His beauty and loveliness in nature, grace, and glory; and God loves the loving soul. Here is the sweet life of mutual love—God loving us, and we loving Him. Creature-love is but small compared with this. Then, how inconstant they are. But our dear God is ever the same, and we can kneel before the tabernacle and feel that our Lord is all for us. It is not hard to give up a little love for so much love. But God will have us very faithful; and chastity is our guarantee for this. Further, love for creatures expands under chastity. Consecrated to God, we are not tied in our love to any one

¹ "Imit.," 3. 32. The vows are treated p. 208. Here we briefly speak of the love we should have for them, as means to the end.

creature, but we love all, according to God. This is the spring to zeal for souls ; and the love of God overflows in love to our neighbour. Chastity, therefore, and detachment from the things of the flesh, help us vastly in developing the life of Divine charity.

3. We may say that obedience yokes us to our Blessed Lord ; for it gives us the will of God to be done, from morning till night ; and we live and work in dependence on Him ; for He is the head of angels and men, and He says to us, "Abide in Me, and I in you." Then, "there is no power but from God, and those that are are ordained of God."¹ Therefore every legitimate authority represents the Divine authority. Happy privilege of souls dedicated to God in religion—the privilege of finding the Divine will in all that has to be done, according to approved rule. What an expanse it gives to the soul. *Quomodo dilexi legem tuam Domine*—"How have I loved Thy law, O Lord ; all the day long it is my meditation." The law of God is God's will to be done, given us by obedience. How we should love all this. It is the love of our state, and of its duties, that gives us the spirit of our state.

III. Our dedication to God by the three vows implies also a living according to an approved rule. Therefore as I love my state of life and love my vows, I must also love my rules, and

¹ Rom. 13. 1.

love to keep them, even although of themselves they do not bind under sin.

It must be admitted in religious life that the rules represent the will of God to be done, and this is all that we need to urge us to keep them. They are approved by the Church, and they are certainly made to be kept. It would be a snare to say that because they do not bind under sin they need not be kept. We are all of us doing many things daily that we are not *bound* to do, and we do them for the sake of our well-being and common interests. We are not *bound* to take meat, butter, sugar, or salt at our meals. We are not *bound* to take a bath; not *bound* to keep cattle or poultry. S. Gregory was not bound to send S. Augustine to England, nor was S. Thomas bound to write his "Summa." Therefore it does not follow because we are not bound to do things we should not do them. The rules do not bind under sin, yet they have to be observed because they belong to our state; they are the chosen means of training us in religious life; they help us in the observance of our vows; a grace is attached to the keeping of each one of them, and they are thus continually enriching our lives; they are ordered, as the vows are, to the work of our perfection, and we may ever feel that by observing them we are doing the will of God. All this is amply enough to urge us to keep them, and to love to keep them: and it is the full love of all that belongs

to our state, and the acting accordingly, that gives us the spirit of our state.

To have all rules binding under sin would be more than trying to the conscience. Wisely therefore have our legislators arranged otherwise. Our dedication to God, our obligation to advance in the way of perfection, the great law of love, and the fact of the rules being among the instruments of perfection, are ample guarantees that they will be observed independently of their not binding under sin. S. Francis of Sales tells us this, as follows : "As God's love grows within us, it will make us more and more exact in the observance of the rules, although of themselves they do not bind under sin. Thus souls do by love as much, or more, than they do by fear. Therefore religious will from love observe their rules."¹ Let all good religious, then, strive to train themselves to the spirit of their state by loving the duties that belong to it, and loving to do them, and do them well. It appertains to the making of themselves, to the privilege of a life of love with God on earth, and to their usefulness with our Blessed Lord, with the angels and the saints, in the work of the Church here below. Should we not try more and more to liken ourselves to them, associated as we are with them in God's work on earth ?

¹ Conference I.

XIII

THE PRIESTLY LIFE

Ad vos O Sacerdotes. God's wondrous plan, both in nature and grace, is to work through the agency of His creatures. He gives us life, but through our parents ; light and heat, but through the sun ; breath, but through the air ; food and clothing, but through the hands of our fellow-creatures ; knowledge, but through our teachers. So in the world of grace our Lord comes to us, but through a human mother. He gives His truth to the world, but through the Church ; His grace, but through the Sacraments ; His own very self, in His hidden Sacramental life, but through the hands of His priests. *O veneranda sacerdotum dignitas.*

In all the workings of the sacramental system our Lord is always the principal worker. He it is who baptizes, He who absolves, He who consecrates.¹ *Deus est agens principale.* He is the head of angels and men, and angels and saints co-operate with Him in the workings of the

¹ "Manifestum est quod Sacramenta Ipse Christus perficit. Ipse enim est qui baptizat. Ipse est qui peccata remittit. Ipse est verè Sacerdos, cujus virtute Corpus Ejus in altari consecratur" (S. Thom., *Cont. Gent.* L. 4, c. 76.)

Church on earth. "The Catholic religion is the coming of the unseen world into this. What we see here is as a screen, hiding from us God, and Christ, and the Angels, and the Saints." ¹

But here it is, in these most Divine workings, that our Lord chooses His priests, and wills them to live and work with Him, with His angels and His saints. "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels: and to the Church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel." ²

S. Paul gives us the idea of what a priest should be in his words to Timothy: "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God—a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth . . . a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and profitable to the Lord . . . that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." ³

And S. Thomas may be said to epitomise this when he describes the priestly life as being "midway between God and men; receiving from God in contemplation, and giving to the people by action." ⁴

¹ Newman, Sermons.

² Heb. 12. 22.

³ 2 Tim. 2. 15. 21 and 3. 17.

⁴ S. Thom., 3 Sen., D. 35, A. 3, q. 3.

I. Let every priest in the first place "carefully study to present himself approved to God, a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and profitable to the Lord, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."

Interior sanctity, with a perfect aim, is therefore the first business of the priest as being a "man of God;" so that he may be "profitable to the Lord," and "furnished to every good work." This means briefly, as the Angelic Doctor says, that a priest should be a man of interior and contemplative life, otherwise called a "man of God;" and a man of prayer, receiving his supplies of light, love, and zeal from communication with God *in* prayer; and thus, "furnished to every good work," he will be able of his abundance to give to the people: *de plenitudine, non de penuria largientes.*"¹

Our Lord in His hidden home in the sanctuary is ever with the priest. What a home of contemplative prayer the sanctuary should be. There are our Lord and the priest living and working together in the life of mutual love.² The hidden, the active, the suffering life, are all there before us in this sacrament of love, which is the prolongation of our Lord's Incarnation in our midst. There, too, is the Fountain of living water, ever-flowing to refresh and purify our souls. What a privilege of love is all this if we

¹ S. Bern., Serm. 18 in Cantic.

² "Volo Pater ut ubi ego sum, illic sit et minister Meus."

do but respond to it. It is a matter of forming a spiritual habit—the habit of enjoying the unseen world, the presence of our Lord and His angels, who are ever with us in the sanctuary. “O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day, for Thee my soul hath thirsted. So in the sanctuary have I come before Thee to see Thy power and Thy glory.”¹ “In the sight of Thy angels I will praise Thee.”²

Would it not be easy, at least in many cases, and natural, too, for a “man of God” to train himself to be in our Lord’s sanctuary in the early morning, engaging himself in mental prayer and the Divine office with our Lord and the angels, and so preparing for the greatest act of the day in the offering of the Holy sacrifice? It is all a matter of habit; when we get the habit, we love it. If we never strive to form it, we do not want it. The visible world about us, yea, and within us, engages our time, thoughts, and affections, and Divine things are very insufficiently cherished. As S. Gregory says, “Not having them, we cannot relish them, for who can love what he does not know? As the Psalmist says, ‘Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet’; as though he said, ‘You do not know His sweetness, if you do not taste it.’”³

¹ Ps. 62. 1. 3.

² Ps. 137. 2.

³ “Non habitæ, amari non possunt, quia earum sapor ignoratur. Quis enim amare valeat, quod ignorat? Proinde Psalmista nos admonet, dicens, Gustate, et videte, quoniam suavis est Dominus” (S. Greg., *Hom.* 36 in *Evan.*).

And all this should be entered into not only in the spirit of Divine faith and love, knowing and feeling that our Lord God is best of all, and that none can compare with Him, but also in the truest apostolic spirit, and in real preparation for a harvest of souls ; knowing that in the work of the apostolate the Holy Ghost is ever the principal worker, and that His charity it is that acts as a very magnet to souls. They see more readily than we are aware, in the midst of our ministrations, the difference between those who work in the Spirit of God and those who work in their own human spirit. Who can say how much the work of God and of the Church and of souls is marred, not to say defeated, by the constant misery of the human spirit mixing itself in Divine things ? It is in our daily mental prayer that we have to open our eyes to these Divine truths. There we commune with our Lord, and put ourselves again and again in dependence on Him. There we get more and more to realise the Divine presence, the nearness of our Lord to us, His daily oblation in the Mass for love of God and men. There the priest considers together with our Lord the daily duties of his priestly life—those that immediately concern the service of God, and those that have to do with his care of souls. Everything connected with the Mass is nearest to his heart. He sees there in the light of God what ought to be done, and he resolves to do it. *Sancta sanctè*

tractanda sunt. The altar is holy and, more than all, the tabernacle on it. His very first care is the care of the tabernacle. Is it spotless and bright within and without? Are the sacred vessels in perfect condition? The corporals, pallas, and all the altar linen, and the altar itself, everything on it and around it, are they well and constantly seen to from the instinct of faith and love? *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua*—"How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth for the courts of the Lord."¹ Then, neatness and order should pervade the sacristy in all its departments, nor should we dare to use at the table of our Lord what we would not endure at our own. Cleanliness for its own sake should be maintained throughout both Church and sacristy, as well as Presbytery, as also for the sake of religious and priestly spirit, discipline, and edification.

The offering of the Holy Mass, as already said, is the greatest act of the day, and the greatest act in the world. Therefore it must always come in the first place. The morning mental prayer, more especially in the sanctuary, is the best preparation for the offering of the Holy sacrifice, as it brings us into commune with our Lord. As God ordered Moses to place the Cherubim above the ark, we may well take this to typify the presence of angels in the sanctuary; and S. John Chrysostom tells us that angels nil

¹ Ps. 83. 1.

the sanctuary during the offering of the Mass.¹ Let the four great ends for which the sacrifice is offered be in constant remembrance; adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction, petition, and let us carry on these intentions in the Divine office and in the works of our life generally. Let us also remember that both the Mass and the Divine offices of the Church are going up night and day in the various countries of the world, in thousands of churches and religious communities, so that we may feel in constant union with the Church both on earth and in heaven.

As the Mass is our Lord's great oblation of praise and prayer for the glory of God and the needs of men, so the Divine office is the Church's constant praise and prayer, night and day, throughout the world for the same great ends. Let every priest train himself to the spirit of his state—that is, to the love of his state and its duties—and as he loves the Mass first, because it is our Lord's own coming to him and his most close association with our Lord, let him love the Divine office next, because it is the Church's world-wide praise and prayer for God's own great ends and the vast needs of souls. The instinct of faith will be to love to say and do whatever the Church bids us. Thus in saying the office we address God in His own words and the Church's words, and that is better than words of our own. Moreover, the recitation is

¹ *De Sacerd.* L. 6.

the will of God to be done. God wills the Church's praise and prayer to rise from earth to heaven, day and night, to counterbalance the sins of the world. Let us awaken our faith and love, and be in constant union with our Lord and the Church in all the Masses and offices going on perpetually. We should have great intentions in all, remembering especially the conversion of sinners, the dying, the holy souls, and all the great needs of the Church and the world. If we take care, our daily office may constantly feed our life of love for God and men, by means of the great ends in view. Thus we should love it next to the Mass, and love to say it, and arrange to say it, methodically, and with the real spirit of faith and love: "Every word sounded savourly, sweetly, and delectably, with full accord of mouth and heart, and the body as an instrument and a trumpet of the soul, blowing sweet notes of prayer and praise to God."¹ The daily Mass, the daily office, and daily mental prayer, and all offered and animated with the heart's best love, keep us in our due relation to God, and dispose us in the best way to work successfully for the souls of others. For be it ever remembered, God is the principal worker—as in nature, so in grace; as in natural things, so in spiritual things—in the salvation and sanctification of souls, and we work with Him instrumentally. How united therefore in

¹ Hilton, "Scale of Perf.," P. 3, c. 12.

spirit and in work should His priests be with Himself.

II. The love of God overflows to the love of our neighbour, so the priest is associated with our Lord in saving and sanctifying the souls of men. His love and zeal for souls are the outcome of His love for God, and so are constantly maintained. The word of God, the tribunal of penance, district and hospital work, relations to educated classes, Catholic and non-Catholic, sick calls, receiving visits, instructing converts, and occasional literary work—all these, in their many details, make up the busy active life of the priest. Let him train himself to act in all, not from a human spirit of natural activity, but from the true principle of the love of God, overflowing in love to souls—*forma factus gregi ex animo.*"¹

I. The word of God. This connotes the man of God. The priest is a man of God—that is, he ought to be. If he is, he will give the word of God; if he is not, he speaks and works in his own human spirit; and as the priest, so the people. What untold misery has followed in the Church in times gone by, because pastors have not been men of God! "They sound forth the word, but they give not the spirit."² Arianism and Protestantism were largely the outcome of unworthy priests. It is the spirit and the power and the touch of God that souls need, and for

¹ 1 Pet. 5. 3.

² "Imit.," B. 3, c. 2.

this we want men of God—that is, men of prayer who are “all for God,” who live and work by Him, and according to Him. “If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the power that God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ.”¹

2. The tribunal of penance. The living word is to move and to touch souls to go to God. The Sacrament of Penance it is that brings them to Him. Sermons, instructions, visits, all prepare the way for the soul's return. The Sacrament of Penance effects the work. It is the pouring of the precious Blood upon the souls of men. “Were I at the gate of Paradise,” said S. Philip Neri, “and a soul asked the aid of my ministration, I would leave the whole court of Heaven to attend to him.” How much the glory of God and the good of souls are at stake while penitents are awaiting the priest! “An ass falls, and some one is found to see to it; a soul falls and no one is found to attend to it.”² *Ad vos O Sacerdotes*. Let every priest train himself to the spirit of his state, let him love the duties of his state, and love to do them, and do them faithfully and well, for love of God and love of souls.

3. District and hospital work. When a priest realises the value of a soul and the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, his zeal is at once

¹ 1 Pet. 4. 11.

² S. Bern., *De Consid.*, L. 4. c. 6.

kindled, and "the charity of Christ presses" him¹ to go without delay to all who need him. In trying surroundings and vexing cases it will help him to have a *watchword* to comfort him and spur him on—e.g. *Caritas est hic*. Charity, the love of God and men, is here. I will love it, and embrace, and choose it, and prefer it. *Quid melius? Quid pretiosius?* Looking, too, to his own spiritual progress in all, S. Gregory's words are full of consolation: "Charity even then rises on high, when it descends low, and as it descends to the lowest, it ascends to the highest."²

4. Relations to the educated, Catholic, and non-Catholic. Friendliness, without familiarity, would seem to be the priest's ideal here. His apostolic instinct will tell him how to adapt himself to the variety of individualities around him. The Apostle becomes a "Jew to the Jew to gain the Jews, and weak to the weak to gain the weak, and all things to all men to gain all."³ He has constantly to train himself to high principle; to consider that while "all things are lawful, all things are not expedient";⁴ to refrain himself not only from all evil, but "from all appearance of evil";⁵ and to "keep the things that are of edification one towards another."⁶ His indirect influence, both among

¹ 2 Cor. 5. 14.

³ 1 Cor. 9. 20.

⁵ 1 Thes. 5. 22.

² "Past.," P. 2, c. 5.

⁴ Ibid. 6. 12.

⁶ Rom. 14. 19.

Catholics and non-Catholics, will be very largely felt from priestliness and saintliness of life. Whereas, on the other hand, untold harm comes to the people from imperfect and worldly-minded priests. S. Gregory says : *Sacerdotes mali ruina populi*.¹

5. Visits and instructions. It was S. Ambrose's practice never to shut himself in his house, but to be accessible at all times.

S. Francis of Sales sometimes spent a long time with persons of no consequence, who talked to him of things of trifling importance. The Saint would say : "These matters appear to them weighty, and they want to be comforted. God knows I require no higher employment. The merit of our services consists not in the excellency of the works done, but in the love which accompanies them. An action of small virtue, done with much love of God, is far more excellent than a great work done with less love of God."

III. The life of a good priest is thus seen to be a life of continual charity to God and to his neighbour. He is hereby in the direct road to Christian perfection. Doubtless the trials of his virtue are very great, for he lives in the world ; and unless he trains himself to be a man of highest principle, and that principle the love of God and of his neighbour, and unless he strives to live and act accordingly, he will very easily

¹ Epist. 64, L.[9].

be drawn from God and from his life of true charity to the life and spirit of the world around him. Let him learn a spiritual secret given by S. Augustine : *Si adhærebis superiori, conculcabis inferiora*.¹ Keep to the higher principle, cling to Divine things, then you shall conquer the things of the world and the flesh. By cleaving to the higher, you are superior to the lower. Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God.²

¹ Enar. in Ps. 45.

² Rom. 12. 2.

XIV

MENTAL PRAYER

“DRAW nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.”¹ The general notion of mental prayer is that it is a mutual intercourse between the soul and God. As God is everything to the creature and the creature is nothing apart from Him, it is quite evident that we must be on constant terms of communication with Him if we are to succeed in the workings both of our interior and exterior life.

We ought from early years to cultivate the greatest love for mental prayer. How will it be with us if we do not love to go to God—to think of Him, to speak to Him, to listen to Him, to give ourselves to Him, and receive of the pourings of His light and love? All this is mental prayer. It presupposes a soul earnest in spiritual life, and much progress in mental prayer will presuppose a loving soul; for love *will* think of the object of its love, will seek it, and long to find it; and all these tendencies of a soul to God are but the different ways and degrees of prayer, signifying that the soul is seeking, and

¹ S. James 4. 8.

bent on finding its object. As there are different states of spiritual life, so there are different kinds of mental prayer corresponding thereto.

Three different stages of spiritual life are well known and admitted by all—the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive. They represent the journey of the soul to its ultimate end. We begin a journey, we continue it, and we finish it. The meaning of making a start is to get to the end. So there are beginners in spiritual life; they begin in view of going on. It would be futile to begin with no intention of carrying on the work and finishing it. It would be like the one in the Gospel who “began to build and was not able to finish.” All the world tells us that the whole meaning of undertaking a work is to bring it to completion.

Therefore in spiritual things we must begin, we must go on, and we must persevere to the end. The early part of spiritual life is called the purgative way, because souls then are chiefly concerned with amending and improving their interior spiritual condition, correcting their faults, changing their habits, and disposing themselves to newness of life. As in this work a soul must be taught from the beginning to have a constant recourse to God from whom all blessings flow, seeing that He it is who “works in us both to will and to accomplish,” so this recourse it is that makes up mental prayer. And the prayer of beginners is adapted to the life and work of

beginners. The prayer proper to the purgative way is that called meditation, speaking generally.

I. Let me understand my work and my corresponding prayer. I want unforming and reforming. I have to put off the old man and put on the new man. It is a gradual process. God is the principal worker in this as in all else, but I must work with Him. My prayer must be with Him, and it is called meditation.

The general notion of meditation is that it is a combination of considerations, affections, and resolutions, in view of helping us onwards in spiritual life. It may be undertaken by a formal or an informal method, and in this there should be much liberty of spirit. What agrees with one soul does not agree with another, and God Himself deals differently with different souls. "The Spirit breatheth where He willeth." "And God fulfils Himself in many ways."

The formal method is drawn out for us in books. Preludes and points are given, and on them considerations are made. This is the first part of the meditation. The considerations are meant to move the soul towards God, to incline it to speak to Him. For as the considerations, taken as they are from Holy Writ and the saints, and sacred thoughts gathered therefrom, may be had as the speakings of God to the soul, so it is right for the soul to speak to God in return; and thus meditation becomes what it is, a mutual intercourse between the soul and God,

being the first ordinary species of mental prayer. In order to be practical these affections of the soul to God are followed by some resolution bearing on daily life. And in the formal method all this is drawn out in books for those not having the ability to draw it out for themselves.

The informal method pursues the same course, but with much greater freedom. Passages from Holy Scripture, the Fathers, Saints, and spiritual writers are taken—more especially from such a book as the “*Imitation*”—and on these considerations are made, each one ruminating as he will. When he feels his soul stirred he speaks to God, fully feeling that God has already spoken to him. These are the affections of mental prayer, and the better part of it, for the whole meaning of the prayer is to bring God and the soul in concert together. Hence let the soul speak and then be quiet, to see if God may impress it further. If, however, it wanders, it will have to read again and renew its considerations and then its affections, and then finally come to the resolution of acting accordingly. The informal method seems to have been Cardinal Newman’s way of meditating, for he says that he would “rather have three verses from S. John than three points of a meditation.”

But all this is accidental. The essential thing is for each soul to get into communication with God; and to this end let each one take heed to his lights, and follow whatever drawing he may

have. God fulfils Himself in many ways, and deals with the same soul differently at different times. It is important to remember that our prayer is a means to an end. It is to help us onwards in the way of love in view of drawing nearer and nearer to God. Therefore we are to progress in the ways of prayer, and not remain for ever the same. If we have used the formalities of books hitherto, it does not follow that we are to use them always. We may easily pass from the formal to the informal method, for it is progress to do so: and we may easily pass from less consideration to more affection in prayer; and certainly as a soul advances in love, by preferring God more and more, and sacrificing for His sake its love of lower things, it will want to simplify its prayer; because love needs but little consideration to move to its object, and therefore it might be well said that the measure of our love is the measure of our prayer; and as we advance in one we advance in the other.

II. Speaking technically, a soul that maintains its progress passes onwards to what is called the illuminative way. It does not thereby desert the purgative way, for faults will always abound; but it looks more to our Lord and less to itself—more to the unseen world and less to things that are seen, more to grace and less to nature; and the prayer that corresponds to all this is affective prayer. In meditation we have the beginnings

of affective prayer ; and as acts lead to habits, so repetitions of affection go to forming its habit—the habit, namely, of speaking to God, loving Him, and receiving His light and love. With exercise in all this come ease and pleasure, as they come also in natural things ; and thus a soul loves to speak to God, and with love speaks more and more easily to Him, and then speaks to our Lord, then to our Lady, then to the Angels and Saints ; then it bursts forth into praise, and then into petition ; and then it looks all over the Church, and sees the vast needs of souls ; and it gives itself to intercessory prayer, in union with our Lord in His Sacrificial and Sacramental Life, with our Blessed Lady, the Angels, and the Saints, and all faithful souls on earth ; then a text comes in to its memory, or a choice thought, and these now take the place of any book ; and maybe if it gets more and more loving, the Holy Spirit will give to it a ray of His own light, and then a touch of His own love, and its progress then is more in a moment than before in many months and years, because in those days it acted for itself, and now the Holy Ghost acts for it. But its nature is yet weak, and not wholly subdued to God, and therefore it soon falls back into itself again, and has perhaps to return to its books and meditations. Still, it has got to a certain habit of affective prayer, and its habit serves it ; and as it loves, so it wants to go on, nor will it be detained by forms and methods.

If it is wanting to the Divine light and love, or has been wanting, it turns to its Divine object with renewed acts of love, contrition, and oblation. It cries : *Deus meus, ne sileas a me. Veni Domine, noli tardare. Amplius lava me Domine. Ne projicias me a facie Tua.* Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Show me, O Lord, Thy ways, and teach me Thy paths. Strengthen me in a perfect spirit. It offers all our Lord's merits to purify its soul, casting its miseries into the sea of God's mercies, that they may be all drowned in the waters of His love, and thus it goes to God again through and with our Lord. All this and many other acts, whether of praise, love, petition, intercession, enter into affective prayer, and more and more does the soul love and enjoy it, and less and less does it incline to methods and books, unless it get unfaithful, and so forfeit much of Divine light and love, and then have to seek its way again by thoughts and forced acts. But if it keep faithful, the Holy Ghost inclines to it more and more, impressing it with His truth and love, and leading it onwards, little by little, even to the gate of contemplation.

III. As a loving soul gives its thoughts and affections continually to God and Divine things, it loves them more and more, and sees that nothing can compare with them. Moreover, it easily realises the Divine presence around and within it, for "of Him, and by Him, and in

Him are all things,"¹ so that it sees God in creatures, and creatures in God. Nor does it ever want to cut the good from its source. When it comes to this habitual sense of the presence of God, it begins to enter on the unitive way, although from the exigencies of daily life and its own natural activities it is often found falling back. Yet its habit serves it, and as it grows serves it better and better. The prayer corresponding to the unitive way of spiritual life is that of contemplation. It is probable that the great majority of those who cultivate spirituality in the ordinary way, never reach the unitive stage of spiritual life, and consequently never get to contemplative prayer. The whirl of things here below is too much for the development of the contemplative spirit. The getting to the quiet view and enjoyment of Divine things presupposes a giving up of lesser things, and this means mortification and sacrifice. Then a certain simplification of soul is required that sets itself on God as the One and only good, and is willing to let all things go to attain to Him, as the merchant gives all for the pearl of great price. But so it is that not many are found generous enough for this. Again, the force of habit is very strong; so much time is given to the multiform activities of nature, that mental prayer, even in its lower stages, is hardly undertaken with real relish, whereas true love and preference are

¹ Rom. 11. 36.

above all things necessary for receiving the grace of contemplation. Our Lord God acts by law ; as in the natural, so in the spiritual order. He does not infuse the soul till the bodily parts are fit to receive it. Nor does He give the grace of faith to those who put impediments in the way. Neither does He give the choice grace of contemplation until a soul presents the due dispositions for receiving it. For the gift of contemplation is God's own gift of Himself to a soul. This can never be expected as long as a soul is set upon vanities and unrealities. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." Let it be seen that God is the God of your heart and your choice and your preference, and let Him see that you bid adieu to your toys and idols, that you empty your little home within of noisy strangers, and then open the door to Him, and let Him see that you stand on humility, on the recognition of your nothingness and of His Infinity ; and the disposition of mortification must be there too ; the readiness to renounce and to sacrifice the trifles of the flesh and the world for the sake of securing things divine. All these dispositions granted, it will be in the normal condition of spiritual progress to proceed from the purgative to the illuminative, from the illuminative to the unitive, from meditation to affective prayer, and from affective prayer to contemplation.

Much allowance has to be made in all this for

the weakness and inconstancy of nature, and for the varieties of individualities. One progresses quickly in spiritual life, and in prayer too. If God but touch a soul, the work is soon done. Others are different, not ready for the Divine touch—so poured out upon externals; so given to natural activity; “too young to be wise, too generous to be cautious, too warm to be sober, too intellectual to be humble.”¹ Thus they take a long time to make any notable progress; they crawl along the way, while others walk steadily; some run, and a few even fly. “Be steadfast in the way of the Lord.”² We certainly need whole-heartedness with God. We cannot expect Him to give Himself to us if we do not give ourselves to Him. “Unless a man be at liberty from things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine.”³ We have to be loving and courageous in the way of God, ardently desiring Him, and willing to let things go to gain Him.

“O Lord God, Thou art not estranged from him who does not estrange himself from Thee.”⁴

¹ Newman, *Apol.* ² Ecclus. 5. 12. ³ “Imit.,” 3. 31.

⁴ S. John of the Cross, “Prayer of the Enam. Soul.”

XV

MORTIFICATION

IN the nature of the case we have to be men of mortification as well as men of prayer, if we are to succeed in spiritual life and progress. Both prayer and mortification are indispensable to the Christian, religious, and priestly life. For as God is the Fountain of all goodness, and we are nothing apart from Him, so it is by prayer that we look to Him, speak to Him, listen to Him, give ourselves to Him, and receive of the pourings of His light and love. And as we belong to a fallen race, and our nature tends so much downwards, and the temptations of the world, flesh, and devil are so strong, it is evident we can never be safe in soul except by a large amount of discipline and self-denial; and this it is that makes up mortification. We cannot believe the articles of the Apostles' Creed without much mortification to the intellect, nor can we keep the ten commandments without a constant mortification to the will. If, then, we give ourselves to God, and make life a progress to Him by aiming at the union of perfect love, prayer is necessary to lift the spirit up and mortification necessary to put the flesh down.

To understand the *rationale* of mortification we must ever be in mind of the twofold life within us—nature and grace ; nature inclining downwards, and grace upwards. Moreover, we must take in our position here below. Man is midway between the angels and the animals, as S. Thomas tells us. In his spiritual nature he resembles the angels, in his bodily nature the animals. And as when he lives and works according to his spiritual nature he becomes more and more like to the angels, so when he lives and works according to his fleshly inclinations he becomes more and more like to the animals. Hence “the life of man is a warfare on earth.”¹ With the conflicting elements of his life it must be so. Nature has her laws, and grace has her laws. Both cannot reign together ; one must govern, the other must serve. Now grace is the very kingdom of God within the soul—“The kingdom of God is within you”²—and therefore we must give to God what is His own. He is the Sovereign of man’s intellect, heart, will, and all the rest, and all have to be subdued to Him ; “but now we see not as yet all things subject to Him.”³ “All seek the things that are their own,”⁴ and thus habits of self-gratification and independent action are got into, breaking forth perpetually into play, whereby nature gathers strength from use, and grace from

¹ Job 7. 1.² S. Luke 17. 21.³ Heb. 2. 8.⁴ Phil. 2. 21.

neglect is weak. Then it is that an earnest soul rises up, loving God better than itself, and looking to His interests in the life of grace as well as to the Divine riches lying hid there for its own great benefit and merit ; its one eager desire is to have itself under the full governance of grace, and to bring all in its nature into subservience and alliance therewith. In all this, as in all else, God is ever the principal worker, and we work with Him. He "worketh in us both to will and to accomplish." ¹ Is not this ordinary justice ? For if the soul of man be the kingdom of God, certainly it is of God to reign therein ; and thus we say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." But the reign of God implies the subjection of man, and this subjection implies a constant exercise of mortification.

I. Let us understand that the intellect of man must be subject to God, and by the theological virtue of faith it is so far subject. Faith provides Divine truth for the intellect, and as the truth of God is above the intellect of man, it follows that man's intellect must be subject to God's truth. But with all this there is mortification. The intellect is very active, and prying, and inclined to independence. In all matters of faith we must be trained to be wholly subject to God and the Church. In this subjection to Divine authority is to be found the very essence of religion ; as we are told by the leading mind

¹ Phil. 2. 13.

of Newman, "The essence of religion is in authority and obedience."¹ God speaking and man obeying. Faith is not a seeing or an understanding, but a believing on Divine authority. And as we believe on the authority of men the things that concern natural life, so we are bound to believe on the authority of God things that concern spiritual life. And authority there must be both in nature and grace; and if we are subject to the one we must be subject to the other. It is the subjection to Divine authority that excludes doubt, but it does not exclude difficulty. Difficulties in faith are in the nature of the case, seeing that it is impossible for the finite to understand the Infinite. But the finite is bound to believe the Infinite. With this it ever has, and is bound to have, difficulties, but not doubts, because doubts question the veracity of the authority, and no creature may question the veracity of God. Therefore "ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."² But here comes in mortification; and it is therefore part of the homage that we owe to God. Man's pride of intellect must knock under; there is mortification, there is humility, there is self-denial. "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." The childlike disposition towards the Church bespeaks the habit of mortification. If it subdues the human light it supplements it by the

¹ "Developm.," c. 2, s. 2.

² Newman, *Apol.* c. 5.

Divine light. Ever remember the twofold life within, nature and grace. Reason is the light of nature, faith the light of grace. We do not get to God by nature but by grace, therefore we want the light of God as well as the light of man. Yet the world in its folly cries out that reason must be independent, and not be shackled by the tyranny of faith. Tyranny indeed! as if truth were tyranny! It is the world that tyrannises by saying, "You shall not have the truth." Truth is the very object of the intellect. Therefore when it is given, it is a gift of God's love elevating that noble faculty; nor is it any privilege to the intellect to "entangle itself with an infinity of questions."¹ Its privilege is to find the truth and to hold it, and it willingly and rightly mortifies its activity whenever this is found leading it astray. Hence the great heretics and those who fall away from the faith, fall from indulging the intellect in defiance of authority, instead of mortifying it in obedience thereto.

II. Outside the circle of faith there is a larger circle of opinion; and here the intellect has ample scope for its activity. But there is a borderland between faith and opinion where ancient traditions and teachings have been kept in the Church, taught by saints, handed on by doctors, maintained by divines, and held in belief by the faithful. Confidence in God and the Church and diffidence in ourselves will have

¹ Eccles. 7. 30.

to rule us here. *Sentire cum ecclesia* is an admitted principle; and considering the vast amount of intellectual aberration that has gone on in and around the Church these 1800 years, and the multiform heresies that it has hatched, bred, and diffused to the awful destruction of faith and morals, the instinct would be to trust to the Church in her own science, which extends far outside the circle of faith, and to distrust in things bordering on the divine, our own mental activity. And here the law of mortification serves us well. We are to remember the twofold life of nature and grace. Faith belongs to grace, and it must be guarded well. Over-intellectual activity on the borderland of faith is often very risky. Hundreds and thousands have got upon rocks and reefs just there. They indulge the intellect when they might so well mortify it. Its power is so limited. Yet they waste it away. How well it might engage itself on the knowledge of God and things divine, on the Scriptures, the Fathers, on dogmatic, ascetic, mystic science, on the lives of the saints, the history of the Church; and all in true subordination to the science and the spirit of the Church, like children ever loving and helping their mother. How certain it is that we can only know a little, a very little of anything, and have to leave all the rest unknown. This being so, how carefully we should train ourselves to the discipline and frequent mortification of the intellect, and that

other active and delusive faculty, the imagination, with it. The amount of time that goes in newspapers, reviews, illustrated periodicals, and novels, is appalling ; and acts make habits, and habits bound forth again into action ; and all for want of training, discipline, and mortification ; and by indulging the lower, the taste for the higher rapidly dwindles. What are we making of life ? "Life has terrific possibilities, and history is full of ruins. What might it be if we lived according to our best knowledge ?" ¹

III. As God is the God of the intellect, so is He also of man's will, and its love. The will is the moving power in man by its wondrous freedom, but it moves according to its love ; so that "good or bad loves make good or bad lives." ²

The laws of nature and grace run in close parallels here. As a man loves, so he moves, whether for good or for evil. Nature is exceedingly active in all her powers, and the world, flesh, and devil very exacting. The natural self-love of the man is the moving power in all these activities. The things a man loves, of those he thinks, and according to his love he moves and works. But "flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God," ³ nor can the stream rise above its source. It is by grace and not by

¹ Dr. Barry, Pref. to "Structure of Life."

² "Animus amore fertur, quocunque fertur. Nec faciunt boni vel mali mores, nisi boni vel mali amores" (S. Aug. Ep. 157 and 155, *ad Hil and Maced.*).

³ 1 Cor. 15. 50.

nature that we get to God. For this end the light of faith is added to the light of reason, and the love of God which is charity is added to natural love ; and “ as the will commands all the powers, so charity commands all the virtues.” ¹ Thus nature is subordinated to grace, and the will power is informed and animated by charity, which becomes the moving principle of spiritual life.

But this governing power of grace and charity bespeak and connote the mortification of the natural man : “ The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to the other.” ² “ If you live according to the flesh, you shall die ; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.” ³ Thus it is that the spirit mortifies the flesh, and grace mortifies nature, and the love of God mortifies self-love, and “ they who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” ⁴

As self-love is the moving power of nature, so the love of God is the moving power of grace. If therefore we wish to undertake the reformation of our lives in a systematic, and compendious, and effectual, and practical, and very simple way, let us seize upon the love of God as our principle of life ; it brings us under the governance of the Spirit of God, and God and the soul thus work together. It then declares war against the antagonistic love of self—the

¹ S. Thom., ² Sen., D. 40, Q. 1, A. 5.

² Gal. 5. 17.

³ Rom. 8. 13.

⁴ Ibid. 14.

amor sui, which is the cause of all our sins—and by laying the axe to the root the work is sooner done. But it means self-training, self-culture, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. Moreover, by grasping the higher love we easily let go the lower, for love of some sort, higher or lower, we must have. Why not at once get the higher, which leads us to God? In fact we have it. It is just a matter of using what we have. “The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given us.”¹ As we use it, it grows, strengthens, and develops, then puts forth its power for great exploits, accommodating itself in a thousand different ways, yet simplifying and unifying the spirit by oneness of principle. Thus “there are diversities of graces, but the same spirit; diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all.”² “All these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will.”³ After a time, when nature has been sufficiently trained and subdued, it is brought into sweet alliance with grace, and both go hand in hand together in the love and service of God, Divine charity the moving and governing power of both; as the Psalmist says, *Ambulavimus cum consensu*; and again, “My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.”⁴

¹ Rom. 5. 5.³ 1 Cor. 12. 11.² 1 Cor. 12. 4.⁴ Ps. 83. 3.

XVI

THE LOVE OF GOD

“THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.”¹ It would seem to be the most natural and easy thing for the creature to love the Creator. The whole instinct of our nature is to love all that is great, good, and beautiful. Who does not love the beauties of nature? How wondrous are the hills, and still more the mountains! “How solemn in their majesty they stand.” Look at the roaring torrents, the everlasting snows, the mighty glaciers, the rocks, the forests, the flowery dells, and smiling valleys. How vast, how magnificent, how overwhelming. And in the smallest works, too, how exquisite is the beauty of the Creator. Look at the form and bloom of the flowers, and the infinite variety and multiplication of nature’s works all around us. They all bespeak God’s reflected glory. “How great are Thy works, O Lord. Thou hast made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with Thy riches.”² And God is the Maker and the Giver

¹ Deut. 6. 5.

² Ps. 103. 24.

of all these good things that we so abundantly enjoy. Do they not all tell us of His wisdom, beauty, power, and love? Do they not all cry out for love to the Creator? Where are our hearts if we do not give them to the God of all things?

We love our parents, because they have brought us up, and done everything for us. But God gave us our parents, and moved them to love us and help us as they did. We love our relations and friends because they are near and dear to us; but no one is so nearly and dearly related to us as God Himself, nor is the love of parents or friends to be compared with His. If to all these creatures we give reverence, esteem, gratitude, devotion, and love, all this intensified to an infinite degree we owe to the Infinitely great, good, and loving God, who is the Creator and giver of all.

I. Our Blessed Lord distinctly tells us that "None is good but God alone."¹ He is the source of all goodness—the Fountain, ever-flowing, overflowing—and all creatures in heaven and earth, in nature and grace, are the recipients of His goodness. This being so, the whole love of my heart ought to go forth to the One, great, and only good. It is of course impossible not to love created good, but what we may do is to train ourselves to see, admire, and love God in His creatures; and seeing that "of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things,"² and that

¹ S. Luke 18. 19.

² Rom. 11. 36.

"in Him we live, and move, and have our being,"¹ this should not be difficult. It is like admiring and loving the artist in his pictures; only God is the ever-present "All in all" around and within us, "giving to all life, and breath, and all things."² It was this devotion to the Divine presence that was so conspicuous in the lives of the saints. It was the realisation of the truth that God is intimately present in all His creatures that enabled them to praise and bless and enjoy His wisdom, beauty, and loveliness in all around them. Thus S. Francis of Assisi "rejoiced in all the works of God's hands; and by the glory and beauty of that mirror he rose to the principle and cause of them all. In all things fair he beheld Him who is most fair, finding the way to the Beloved by His footsteps in created things. With unspeakable devotion he enjoyed that Fountain of goodness, flowing forth through all creatures as in so many streams."³ Nor can we fail to see that as creatures thus lead us to God, we are able all the more to appreciate and enjoy them. And all around they speak with ten thousand tongues of God's love for us, in giving us so many good things abundantly to enjoy.⁴

As in the beauties of the natural world, so also in the love we have for one another the principle is the same. We see the Divine image,

¹ Acts 17. 28.

² Acts 17. 25.

³ S. Bonav., "Life of S. Fran.," c. 9.

⁴ 1 Tim. 6. 17.

likeness, and presence in the souls of our fellow-creatures. There is the kingdom of God, and the life of grace, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the wondrous inner workings between the soul and God. Does it not all urge us to constant mutual reverence and love? In their mental, moral, spiritual, and physical forms human beings are masterpieces of Divine wisdom and power. Sad indeed it is that they are found defacing and overlaying the Divine image which they bear, and dishonouring so constantly the presence of God within them. Yet they are the work of God's hands, redeemed by our Lord's precious blood, and He wills that we work with Him to regain them; and so for the love of God in Himself and in His creatures we have a zeal for souls, and work with our Lord and with His Church to gain them.

II. God's vast love for the children of men was not satisfied with giving them so abundantly of His riches in the beauties of nature and the gifts of natural life. He willed to give them not only His gifts, but Himself. "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son."¹ *Filius datus est nobis*. Our Lord is not lent to us for a time. He is given, He belongs to us, and we to Him. Now we have to love God doubly—as the all-Holy and Infinite God, and as the perfect Man united with the Word. How intensely the all-Holy Creator is bent on having

¹ S. John 3. 16.

the love of human hearts. How could it be otherwise? He knows He is the only good, and that with the riches of His wisdom and love He desires to fill us: *ut impleamini in omnem plenitudinem Dei*.¹ But how can He give us of Himself, His light, love, and happiness, if our thoughts and affections are full of creature images and loves? He will "draw us with the cords of Adam and the bands of love."² So He stoops to our nature. He minds not the hiding and humbling of Himself, nor will He be drawn by the bright angelic choirs. He will gain our human nature over to God. He will take it into His own very Personality. He will have it raised above the angels, yea, raised to God Himself; and woman shall be dignified with man, and He will take His new nature from her, and nothing among the angels shall be compared with His Mother. Then He will live among His dear creatures of earth, and go through all the stages of their mortal life. He will be a child and a boy in His humble home among men. He will be hidden from the world for long years, then He will come forth as the light of the world, then He will suffer. O God, wilt Thou suffer in the house of those that love Thee? "What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me."³ But so He wills to pay our debts. He wills to suffer for a time

¹ Eph. 3. 19.² Osee 11. 4.³ Zach. 13. 6.

that we may not suffer for ever. And remember in all this wondrous life and suffering He who lives and suffers is ALMIGHTY GOD. God suffers for the love of man—to have him, to gain him—that he may be a sharer in His own life and blessedness. Yea, and more and more He hides Himself, and works and suffers for the love of man. His delight is to be with the children of men, and further still he carries on His Incarnation in the marvels of His Sacrificial and Sacramental Life, taking hold of us, getting possession of both souls and bodies, determined to make us co-partners and co-heirs with Himself—and this for ever in His everlasting heavenly home. And with all this must He entreat us? Must He be asking and importuning? “My son, give Me thy heart.” “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” Are we hesitating? Is our Lord to be kept waiting, waiting at the door of our hearts, ready to give us of His riches, yea, to give us Himself? *Filii hominum, usquequo gravi corde, utquid diligitis vanitatem?* It is those “jangling vanities” that engage us; and we keep “idols” too. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”¹

III. It is clear that love must work, and if it work not it is not love.² Thus our Blessed Lord says, “If any man love Me, he will keep My

¹ 1 John 5. *ult.*

² “Amor operatur magna, si est. Si autem renuit operari, amor non est” (S. Greg., *Hom. 30 in Evan.*).

word ; “and again, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” ; and the apostle, “Let us love not in word nor in tongue, but in truth and in deed.” As God’s love for us is ever shown in time and eternity by all He has done, does, and will do for us, so our love for God must be proved by our works.

Let us learn first not to offend the one we love. How careful we are about this in creature friendship. If we are under the greatest obligations to a dearest friend, the idea of offending him is simply incompatible with our love. It would grieve our hearts to do it. The whole instinct is the other way. We delight in pleasing and serving him. So every soul that truly loves God takes its stand here. Its habitual resolution is against every deliberate sin, great and small. A great sin is a turning away from God, and a venial sin is a deflection from Him ; and a loving soul will have none of this. It lives by principle, and acts by it also.¹ Its frailties and faults may be many, but it makes no truce with wilful sin. Its love will not have it.

A second working of the love of our Lord God is to “prefer the attendance on Him before all external things.”² Let us never forget it ; love is preference. How clear this is in the workings of earthly love. Is it not a pleasure to visit a friend ? Is it not a first instinct of love to enjoy

¹ “Unumquodque agit secundum suam formam.”

² “Imit.,” 3. 53.

the presence of the one we love? So it should be in our love of God. It should be our delight to find the presence of God in all the beauties of nature. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."¹ Should we not then "never be less alone than when alone?" It seems to be easy and natural to rise from creatures to the Creator, as we rise from effect to cause. We gladly think of what we love. If our love of God is genuine we love to be with Him and to enjoy His presence. In like manner we love the Church because of the hidden presence of our Lord and the angels. Those who find Divine things irksome can hardly love them much. Indeed in all the works of God, in nature and grace around, within us, and in the souls of others, one who loves God will delight in finding the Divine presence in all. *Deus est agens principale*. This is reality, it is seeing things as they are; and we ought to be "set upon realities."²

A third and principal way in which love works is by doing the will of the one we love. So it is in natural love, so it must be in God's love. "If any man love Me, he will keep My word."³ God's will is declared in His commandments, in the teaching authority and ruling power of His Church, in the dictates of right reason and conscience, by the living voice of superiors, and by the laws and duties of our state of life and the

¹ Rom. i. 20.² Newman.³ S. John 14. 23.

particular office to which we may be appointed. Moreover, we may recognise the will of God in whatever happens which is beyond the control of our own will, as in cases of sickness, pain, and accident ; in losses and crosses ; in troubles and disappointments ; in all the uncertainties of life, health, and death. To a wise and loving soul these all become the occasion of subduing ourselves to God, and whether in the works of life or the trials of life, the business of the creature is to do the will of God and to bring its human will into subjection to the divine. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." "All things must be subdued to Him, that God may be all in all."¹ "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."² "Thy will, not Mine be done."³ God's will is the rule of life, and the doing it is the exercise of our love to Him. If our love be strong, as it should be, it will certainly move us to do the right thing. *Omnia vincit amor* is the thought of the classic poet,⁴ and "love is as strong as death."⁵ It carries us through anything. "It spurs us on to great things, and makes all that is bitter sweet and savoury."⁶ The will is our motive power, and love moves the will ; as a man loves, so he moves and acts.

Fourthly, love shows itself by self-sacrifice both in nature and in grace. The mother sacri-

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 28.

² S. John 6. 38.

³ S. Luke 22. 42.

⁴ Virgil, *Buc.*

⁵ Cant. 8. 6.

⁶ "Imit.," 3. 5.

fices herself for her child ; her mother's love moves her so. The soldier gives his life for love of fatherland, and the children of the world sacrifice their time and friends, and alas ! their religion and God too, for love of pleasure and sin ! What we observe here is that intense love moves to great sacrifices, and so it ought to be in our love and service of God. The spirit of the martyrs shows this in perfect working. So strong was their love for God's truth and will that they sacrificed themselves utterly thereto ; others whose love was weak fell away, and the saints were those who loved God by the sacrifice of self. The apostles and men of apostolic spirit leave all things for the love of Christ and their brethren, and the Fathers of the desert and those who live contemplative and enclosed lives give up the world and the ties of home life and their own ways and wills for the sake of getting to the union of love with God. It is like sacrificing all for the pearl of great price. Every temptation that is encountered and conquered implies the love of God by the sacrifice of self. And all the trials and troubles of life, with sickness, suffering, and death, tell us that God in His mysterious ways requires the utter sacrifice of the natural man before he can be a recipient of the everlasting life of love in heaven. Thus " he that shall lose his life shall find it." And he that forsakes all finds all. But God allows ample solace for those who give up all for Him.

It is rather a happy exchange than a dead sacrifice. It is losing a little to gain much. We give up the perishable goods of nature for the riches of Divine grace—self-will for God's will, natural love for Divine love, creatures for the Creator. Let us be generous with God who is so generous with us. He never ceases to give us of His good things; all around and within us is of Him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." ¹ "Let us love God, because He has first loved us." ²

¹ Ps. 102. 2.

² S. John 1. 4. 19.

XVII

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

"THIS is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."¹ Considering God as the first cause of all things, and the Fountain of all that is great, good, and beautiful in nature and grace; seeing, admiring, and loving Him in all the wondrous works of His hands around and within us, and ever striving to realise His Divine presence in all, we at once feel that among all His works our human nature, with its Godlike powers, is the masterpiece of His hands on earth. And as we see God in the beauties of nature, so we see God in the human soul. As Blossius says, "God, who is present everywhere, is singularly present in the human soul."² He has made it in His own image and likeness. He has endowed it with marvellous powers—a memory vastly capacious, an intellect acute and profound, a will free and determined, a heart tender and loving—and this intellectual and loving spirit knit with a bodily form divine, quite wondrous in its powers and operations. Add to all this the Divine life

¹ S. John 15. 12.

² "Instit. Spirit." c. 3.

within. By grace the soul of man is the kingdom of God and His "homeliest home" on earth. Moreover, God has adopted human nature for Himself, and thus man becomes Christlike and Godlike. Consider, too, that "He has given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways,"¹ so that men and angels are closely associated on earth. It is the prelude to heavenly life. "Thou hast made man a little lower than the angels. Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou hast placed him over the works of Thy hands."²

Viewing thus the beauty and dignity of man's form, powers, and destiny, and his relation to our Lord and the angels, we find the basis of the esteem and love we should have one for another. The more we realise the likeness of God, the grace of God, the kingdom of God, the presence of God within the human soul, the more we are moved to the love of humanity, and to the desire to serve and help one another both in things of nature and of grace.

I. The first great law of charity to our neighbour, the law of nature and of grace, is to love others as we love ourselves—that is, in the same way, not the same measure. It is imprinted in the mind of humanity, and is thus a world-wide natural law. Our Blessed Lord specially approved and renewed it for the Christian life of grace, and thus it stands upon the love of God above all things.

¹ Ps. 90. 11.

² Ps. 8. 6.

In view of seeing how this great law is to be carried out practically, it must first be borne in mind that several other laws and principles have to be taken in conjunction with it. So it is indeed in the arrangement of all our human actions. Man is a very complex being. No two individuals are alike in all things; the requirements of society are very large and various, and surroundings and environments all the world over are perpetually changing. What one requires another does not. What pleases one troubles another. What is suitable at certain times and places is worse than useless when circumstances have changed, and what is food for one is poison for another. It will never do therefore to look at one law and forget twenty others, nor must zeal outrun discretion. In the governance of humanity it is certainly prudence that has to arrange in the manifold and multitudinous operations of life; nor must a thing be done just because it is good. The question is if it is good in the particular surroundings and circumstances in which we find ourselves. Hence the grand Aristotelian and Thomistic definition of prudence, *Recta ratio agibilium*.¹

Coming now to the many ways of loving and helping one another, there is a distinction founded on the constitution of our nature which will throw much light upon questions that occur in this connection, and that is the distinction

¹ "Arist. VI, Ethic" (S. Thom., 2. 2, Q. 47, Art. 2, s. c.).

between affective and effective love. The words explain themselves. Affective love is the inner disposition of the heart really loving, esteeming, preferring, and tending to its object and ready for action if the opportunity come, yet often hindered from the outer act by the force of circumstances. Effective love is love in operation, working actually, practically, and effectively.

The many needs of our neighbour divide themselves into temporal and spiritual. The sphere, however, of each one is exceedingly limited. Some have large means, great abilities, and many opportunities; others have high aspirations, many good desires, and yet no likelihood of realising them; and the great majority have but little means for doing much. Now whenever things are desirable, yet not feasible, we must content ourselves mainly with affective charity, although by fervent prayer for the needs of souls our love for them may be in some sense effective also. As the poet says, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." But in the little world of our own, opportunities, though perhaps in small things, are always abounding for loving one another as we love ourselves, and generally, too, with effective love, and this more or less both in temporal and in spiritual things. And of course in the larger world around, in the governance of countries, of institutions, of communities and families, and in the manifold relations of daily life, the great law

of mutual love is commonly a leading principle with men of culture and religion in the sphere both of nature and of grace. There must always be many degrees of charity both affectively and effectively, and thus there is always room for progress and improvement.

II. In the realm of grace love for one another is part of the great theological virtue of charity by which God is loved primarily for His own sake, and our neighbour secondarily for God's sake. And, further, by the Incarnation we are all united together as the members of Christ, sharing the same supernatural life of grace, and destined all together for our heavenly home.

Those who live by grace—that is, who act by God's love—have always a sure principle to move them to mutual charity and the love of their neighbour. Divine charity is light as well as love: "When it burns in the will it shines in the understanding."¹ Thus it shows a loving soul what it ought to do for others. God's love necessarily goes to the love of humanity. "This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother."² "If we love one another, God abideth in us."³ The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Christ, the Motherhood of the Church, all bespeak the beauty and value of a human soul. The kingdom of God and the presence of God therein tell

¹ Card. Bona, *Via Comp.* c. 9.

² 1 John 4. 21.

³ Ibid. 4. 12.

us that we must love the souls of others as our own. Further, our Blessed Lord distinctly wills to be personified in the members of the human race, seeing that He is the representative man and the Mediator and Saviour of us all; and thus He wills to take to Himself what we do for our brethren: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."¹ How we ought to remember all this, we who live in community, and are constantly with one another; how it should spur us on to please, help, and serve one another; how willing we should be to sacrifice ourselves that we may love and serve our Lord in His members; how careful we ought to be to avoid unkind words, acts, and even thoughts. And if our main work is to progress to the perfect love of God as a habit, disposed to its acts, how we should love to see and to find means so readily at hand for exercising love to God in the service of our neighbour. And "charity even then rises on high when it descends low, and as it descends to the lowest it rises to the highest."²

A question here occurs as to whether we may love those who are cultured, good, and pleasant, more than others who are vulgar and troublesome; or whether we should love them all alike. This question may seem at first puzzling, and yet it is easy of solution if we take the distinction already given between affective and effective

¹ S. Matt. 25. 40.

² S. Greg. "Past." P. 2, c. 5.

love. Affectively it is impossible not to like good souls better than those who are imperfect. The rule, as given by S. Bernard,¹ is that in affective love we must go to the best first, but that in effective love we must attend to the worst before the better. This will be quite clear if we consider the matter. With the heart's affective love we must certainly love God best, because He is the first of all. Then we must love our Blessed Lord, then our Blessed Lady, then the Angels and the Saints—the higher the better, as being nearer to God. And coming to creatures of earth, our love, if it be rightly ordered, is bound to prefer perfection to imperfection, speaking of affective love, the reason being that more perfect souls have within them a larger participation of God's goodness than the others; and for the same reason we necessarily prefer a beautiful object to an unsightly one. All will agree that this is in accordance with the laws of nature; and in the matter of love the laws of grace run on parallel lines.

But in effective love, strange as it may sound, we love the worst first; and we leave the good for the sake of the bad. Yea, we leave our Lord Himself, the Mass, and the Divine office, for the sake of some awful case of wretched sin; and it is all in proper order—the order of effective love. Thus it is that in the midst of the Holy Sacrifice and the office of the Church, when priest, doctor,

¹ Serm. 50 in Cantic.

and nurse are with our Lord and the angels, engaged in the greatest act on earth, all have to go at a call of effective charity to attend the dying sinner ; and were there two dying sinners—one of a common type, the other deeper-dyed and notorious—effective love would go to the worst first. And so it is in the more ordinary cases of daily life. Living and dealing with many around us, who does not and must not prefer, in the affection of the heart, those who are refined and holy to others who are rough and uncultured ? It must be so in the nature of things. Yet when it is a question of helping these souls effectively in their many little needs, we must go first to those who need us most, as in cases of bodily sickness we should go first to those who were worst. The love of our neighbour, proceeding from the love of God, brings much light to the soul ; as the apostle says, “ being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to understand.”¹ The instinct of love shows what is to be done. Thus charity is “ kind, patient, dealeth not perversely, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil.”² How much consideration is needed in dealing with human nature in so many forms ! In superiors it is admitted that a combination of kindness and firmness is the general requisite. Then, with S. Paul, to the weak they have to “ become weak, to gain the weak ” ;³ and even

¹ Eph. 3. 17.² 1 Cor. 13. 4.³ Ibid. 9. 22.

“to the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. I became all things to all men, that I might save all.”¹ It is felt also that many young, unformed, and untrained natures have to be drawn with “the cords of Adam,” and “the bands of love”;² which is about the same as becoming weak to gain the weak. Certainly we cannot expect the autumn fruits in the spring-time, nor can we hope for strong operations from weak natures. It seems, too, that young people are not exactly expected to act from principle; this sounds a little startling. Perhaps it means that they are only yet in the making. But it is certainly part of religious training and ecclesiastical formation to teach all the ultimate end and the main work of life, and this means that the love of God is to be their moving principle.

III. Zeal for the salvation of souls is the outcome of the love of God overflowing to the love of our neighbour. It is a virtue for all Christians to cultivate, as belonging closely to Christian charity. It is a necessary part of religious, priestly, and spiritual life, for no one could love God truly without loving the souls for whom Christ died.

It is clear that with many their zeal for souls will have to be mainly affective, yet to some unknown degree effective by their prayers, as they have neither the ability nor the call to

¹ 1 Cor. 9. 20.

² Osee 11. 4.

work effectively. But prayer entreats God, and God lets Himself be entreated. Let all true lovers of God therefore associate themselves with our Lord and the priesthood of His Church ; let them be in union with all the Masses and Divine offices of the Church going on night and day in the world ; and let them offer all the toils and trials of daily life, too, for the conversion of souls to God—for the heathen, for heretics, and for bad Catholics ; let them specially pray in all this union for the hundred thousand dying daily, and let them pray for the vast wants of the Church in her conflict with the world, and especially for the Holy Father, the bishops, and priests and all the religious of the world, that all may be men of God, and profitable in His hands for the salvation of souls. Let them extend their prayers and penances to the holy souls in Purgatory in the same spirit of love and zeal, looking to the glory of God and the blessedness of the spirits departed. Sometimes of course opportunities for effective charity will come, and then each one must be ready for *caritas in actu*, remembering that our progress is by love, and that our Lord tells us we are to be “ rich towards God.” ¹

Those whose calling is to work for souls must indeed cultivate well the apostolic spirit, for they are “ God’s coadjutors,” ² and He wills to save souls through their hands. Day by day

¹ S. Luke 12. 21.

² 1 Cor. 3. 9.

they should go to God in the quiet of mental prayer before the tabernacle, receiving their supplies of light and love, seeing that the work of souls is primarily God's work, and that their life, principle, spirit, and happiness must be ever *within*. But with all the preference they should have for Divine things, they must be willing to let them go for the time being, and this readily and sweetly, when the call of obedience and charity requires them. After all our business is to do God's will, not to please ourselves; and when God calls us to attend to His interests it would be a curious sort of love not to obey the call, but to stand gazing at Him because this pleased ourselves the most.¹ We must sacrifice even the Divine presence to do the Divine will. But if external works were to swamp our interior life, or to tend that way, it would be sad indeed both for ourselves and others. The work of souls is the work of God, not our work, except ministerially under Him: "If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the power that God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ."² We ought not to deteriorate by working for others; we ought always to be men of principle, and men of God; and certainly, as a holy soul said, "Charity does not cause the loss of charity," nor should our love of souls cause the loss of our love of

¹ From S. Teresa.

² 1 Pet. 4. 11.

God. We must train ourselves through life. Our Lord has chosen us to work with Him, not independently of Him; our inner spirit should keep us true to Him, for He says, "If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me and where I am, there also shall My minister be."¹ The whole work of the Church proceeds by our Lord and His priests in union together; and the whole love of our neighbour, rightly ordered, proceeds from the principle of love to God, "who is above all, and through all, and in us all."²

¹ S. John 12. 26.

² Eph. 4. 6.

XVIII

THE INCARNATION

"God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son." ¹ The ineffable greatness and goodness of God delights in the *diffusion* of His goodness. How vastly we are all surrounded and penetrated through and through with the wondrous gifts of God. How much God must love us to give us constantly and unceasingly so many exceedingly beautiful and enjoyable things. We are so accustomed to them that we forget the love of the Giver in the enjoyment of His gifts. But around us and within us, if we but thought more, the exquisite gifts of God are for ever pouring in upon us. Yet with all this the love of God for His creatures is not satisfied. He wills to give them not only His gifts but Himself. *Filius datus est nobis*. God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. Our Lord God does not lend Himself but gives Himself. The Word Incarnate is made over to the human race. He goes not to the angelic choirs. "He nowhere taketh hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold." ² He belongs to us now, and we belong to Him. He lifts up our

¹ S. John 3. 16.

² Heb. 2. 16.

nature to union with God. He becomes human that we may become divine. Our nature recovers in Him the dignity it had lost by sin. And He willed to come to us through a human mother, that thus the manhood and the womanhood of our nature might once more stand up in all their beauty, yea, and surpass in dignity the angelic nature; "For to which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son,"¹ and to which of the angels said He at any time, thou art My Mother?

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the representative Man, and the model and the perfect Man. It is only through Him and through conformity to Him that we can go to God. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me."² "Whom He foreknew, He predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son."³ Let us learn from our Blessed Lord's life on earth the ways of "holiness, without which no man shall see God."⁴ First there are the marvels of our Lord's infant and hidden life on earth for thirty years, with lessons to all the world of humility, dependence, and obedience. How sweet a virtue humility must be before God, when we find that He, the God of all, empties Himself of the Majesty of His glory and becomes as nothing in the hands of men. Then the utter dependence in which He wills to be on His Blessed Mother,

¹ Heb. 1. 5.

³ Rom. 8. 29.

² S. John 14. 6.

⁴ Heb. 12. 14.

looking to her for everything. How can we ever realise the intense love He will have had for her, and the marvellous holiness He will have bestowed on her, to fit her for such Divine ministrations? What a model to priests our Blessed Lady must ever be, in the intensity of her devotion to the body of our Lord. And what a home of prayer, contemplation, and union with God must the holy house of Nazareth have been during those years of the hidden life. What must have been the sanctity of S. Joseph to have been the chosen guardian of the Word Incarnate and His Blessed Mother? The lowest of the three that he was, he is yet the official superior of the house. Who will not love obedience and subjection, even to those beneath us in power and dignity, from the examples of Jesus and Mary in subjection to Joseph? The beauty and value of an ordinary, humble, homely, hidden life is here shown in all its power and perfection. We cannot doubt that during those thirty years our Lord was living and working for the glory of His Father, and for the regeneration and salvation of the world. Yet it was rather by the way of affective than effective love, at least as far as outer works were concerned. Our Lord would not go forth to evangelize the world until His hour had come. "My hour is not yet come." ¹ God Himself is the first Worker, and His will is the rule of life. He will know where

¹ S. John 2. 4.

to find us when He wants us. What a lesson to all young religious and aspirants to the priesthood is given to us by our Lord's long hidden life at Nazareth. He had no need of preparation for His mission to the world. But He was the model man, and the model priest, and He willed to teach us that our first need, for God and for souls, is the life "hidden with Christ in God."¹ In the work of souls we must be in the hands of God, and work in His Spirit, not our own. "If we live in the spirit, let us walk in the spirit;"² "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."³ For this habit of inner life with God the best years of early manhood will be needed; for "the things thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age"?⁴ although even here grace is very powerful if we work with it; and it is never too late to mend. Further, we learn from our Lord's long hidden life that the real value of life before God is rather from its inner spirit than its outer works. By the inward life of love the Spirit of God lives and works within the soul, apart from Whom the most glittering externals are as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Hence "man seeth the things that appear, but God regardeth the heart."⁵ It is the "hidden man of the heart" who is "rich in the sight of God."⁶

¹ Col. 3. 3.² Gal. 5. 25.³ Rom. 8. 14.⁴ Eccclus. 25. 5.⁵ 1 Kings 16. 7.⁶ 1 Pet. 3. 4.

But when God's time comes then we pass from the hidden to the active life, and whatever works we may do there, the same truth underlies all, that the supernatural worth and merit of our actions is determined not by their external but their internal qualities. As the "Imitation" tells us, "God regards rather not how much we do, but with how much love we do it;"¹ that is, rather the inner spirit than the outer work. But outer works, great or small, that have to be done, must be done, yet with the right spirit. "It is the spirit that giveth life."²

II. When our Lord's hour came He was ready to do His appointed work. He is the model and the perfect Man, the perfect lover of God and of men. He went about doing good—giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healing the sick, raising the dead, calling sinners to His side and releasing them, casting out evil spirits, teaching the multitudes in the plain, but His disciples on the mountain; to tell us to accommodate ourselves to the weak, but that men of God must ascend the heights. Then comes the salvation of the world and the provision for future ages. The Catholic Church is the creation of the God-Man, and our Lord wills that it should co-operate with Him till the end of the world; for such is the plan of God, in nature and grace, to give us His good things through the agency of others. Thus He is the "Light of the World," but He sends

¹ "Imit.," I. 15.

² S. John 6. 64.

forth His light and truth to the nations by the apostles and priests of His Church, and through them, too, by means of the Sacraments, go forth the streams of His grace to the souls of men. And our Lord, who might have lived on the earth till the end, wills to carry on the works of the Incarnation through His Church; and thus the Church becomes our Mother, as God is our Father; our spiritual life of grace is from Him through her. His truth is through her, His forgiveness through her, His very presence among us through her. Our Lord begins all this on earth by the organisation of His Church. Then the Spirit of God in due time possesses her to abide with her for ever.

All are to learn from our Lord's example the duty of undertaking the works of life, each in his own state, and in the office to which he is appointed, always living and working in union with our Lord and His Church, never losing sight of the main work of life, which is the progress of the soul to its ultimate end. For the rest there will always be great diversity in the duties of different states and offices, and devotion to the will of God will be the rule for all. "God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased Him."¹ Therefore "let every one, wherein he was called, therein abide with God,"² "doing the will of God from the heart; serving as to the Lord, and not to men."³ Each one should be devoted to

¹ 1 Cor. 12. 18.

² Ibid. 7. 24.

³ Eph. 6. 6.

his state and office just because it is God's will; for what is sweeter than doing the will of Him we love? Whatever our state is, that we should love; whatever our duties and offices are, those too we should love, and strive to do them well, with inner spirit, and outer fervour; and it is this love, and the working according thereto, that gives us the spirit of our state. How could we answer to God if we do not serve Him and do His will from the heart? Some seek themselves in their work—*Omnes quærent quæ sua sunt*"¹—and some seek particular places and offices, not willing to serve except they find their liking. Might they not learn even from the poet?—

“Those also serve who only stand and wait.”

Let us leave room for Providence to work. *Deus est agens principale*. Let God place you where He wills. It is risky to put ourselves into place. The question is if God wants us there. We are learning all this from our Lord, in the work of His active life. He waits till His hour has come, and then does the Divine will. “I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”² “I seek not My own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth.”³ “The things that please Him I do always.”⁴ “I do nothing of Myself.”⁵

III. Our Lord passed from His active to His suffering life, for He was not only the repre-

¹ Phil. 2. 21.

² S. John 5. 30.

³ Ibid. 8. 50.

⁴ Ibid. 8. 29.

⁵ Ibid. 4. 28.

sentative man, but the representative sinner. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all."¹ "He bore our sins in His body on the tree,"² and "for the wickedness of My people have I struck Him."³ All the sins of the world our Blessed Lord took in upon Himself, and the justice of God struck at sin in His well-beloved Son, and spared the sinner. God willed that the heinousness of sin should be thus shown to mankind, for that "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."⁴ How unspeakably loving and tender has our Blessed Lord been to our poor humanity in thus paying so fully the penalty of our sins, that through Him we might find forgiveness and acceptance with God. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁵ How it all tells us the evil of sin which has thus crucified the Son of God, and how we must resolve against sin for the love of our Lord's precious blood. Then in God's own plan for the salvation of men He wills that we be conformed to Christ suffering; and the conditions of life here below are so arranged and ordered that every one has his share therein, whereby we "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."⁶ In this we have to work with God according to the purpose of His will. All things must be subdued to Him, and He uses our sufferings to subdue us

¹ Isaiah 53. 6.² 1 Pet. 2. 24.³ Isaiah 53. 8.⁴ Rom. 8. 32.⁵ S. John 15. 13.⁶ Col. 1. 24.

to Himself; quickly they come and go, and bringing us the Divine will "we make it our joy to please God";¹ the love of pleasing Him brings pleasure to our pain and "makes all that is bitter sweet and savoury."² In the time of suffering we have always to remember the many consolations we have through life, so many that we do not realise them. God is ever most loving, giving us of His gifts in nature and grace abundantly to enjoy, making our little lot of trial and suffering subservient to our benefit and merit, and sustaining us therein with the prospect of never-ending blessedness in the life of heaven. Thus "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."³

All therefore have to look to our Lord as the Model of perfect life and action. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."⁴ It tells us that wherever we are and whatever be our state, our office, and work, we must follow the light which our Lord gives. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁵ "Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."⁶ "If we walk in the light, as He also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"⁷—the fellowship, and the society, and the friendship between the soul and God.

¹ S. Teresa. ² "Imit.," 3. 5. ³ Rom. 8. 18. ⁴ S. John 1. 4.

⁵ S. John 8. 12. ⁶ S. John 12. 36. ⁷ 1 John 1. 7.

XIX

OUR LORD'S SACRAMENTAL LIFE

*FILIUS datus est nobis.*¹ Unto us the Son is given—given over to our race. “Behold I am with you all days, until the end of the world”²—not lent for a time, but given to you. “My delights are to be with the children of men.”³ To spend a few years on earth clothed in our nature and conversing with men, and then to return to the Father would never have satisfied the love of the God-Man. Our Lord gave Himself to us, and He willed in all His power and love to do it handsomely. The Incarnation was a wondrous invention of His love for humanity, seeing that it is the Divine uniting itself to the human, and the human lifted to the Divine. But our Lord loves us one by one, and has made the souls of men His “homeliest home” on earth. From the beginning He has been the “hidden God.” “Verily Thou art a hidden God.”⁴ He was hidden in His Incarnation. He would give Himself still more, and hide Himself yet more. His Eucharistic life is the prolongation of His Incarnation, and the extension of His hidden presence to each one individually.

¹ Isaias 9. 6.

² S. Matt., *ult.*

³ Prov. 8. 31.

⁴ Isaias 45. 15.

All this is wonderful, and yet, if we may say it, not to be wondered at, considering man's destiny. Is he not made for the everlasting enjoyment of the Divine presence in heaven, with the angelic choirs, and the spirits of the just made perfect? This being so, it would seem to be fitting that the training on earth for his ultimate end should be such as to put him in close relation with the unseen world. But the unseen world around us here is a reflection of the world above; as the apostle says, "I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, and I heard a voice saying, Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them."¹ Thus it is that the life of the Church triumphant in heaven descends to the Church militant on earth—the presence of God surrounded with the angels and saints. "You are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the firstborn, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel."² There seems to be another reason which would move our Lord to continue His life on earth among men, and to be associated therein with the angels and saints, and that is in view of counteracting the sins of the world. Alas! how unceasingly the

¹ Apoc. 21. 2.² Heb. 12. 22.

sins of men rise up from earth to heaven. How would the All-holy God endure it all were it not for the balance on the other side—the infinitely sweet homage of the well-beloved Son, all hidden in His Sacramental Life, with the bright angels around Him; yea, and so many loving souls of earth in the great expanse of the Church militant here below? If God was willing to spare the city for the sake of ten just men, how much more will He spare the world for the sake of His beloved Son in ceaseless union with so many pure spirits of heaven and earth!

I. The mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is ever before us in the hidden presence of the tabernacle, making the Church so truly the house of God, and the place where His glory dwelleth. How much all religious and priests ought to prize the sacredness of their home, where they live under the same roof with our Lord. Is it not the instinct of love to enjoy the presence of the one we love? Is not this the whole explanation of the mystery of our Lord's Sacramental presence? He loves the children of men, therefore He desires to be with them—and to accomplish it in His power and love, He devises the wondrous mystery of His Sacramental Life. It is as though He would not be less rich, or less wonderful in the works of grace than in those of nature. Look around at His works in nature—look at the power, and the constant work of multiplication going on there, the multiplication

of flowers, fruits, leaves on the tree, and grass in the fields. It is easy to the power of God thus to multiply His works. *Ipsa dixit, et facta sunt*. So, if He wills, He can multiply His Sacramental presence. He does for grace what He does for nature. It is so like Himself to be wonderful both in one and the other. We see, too, how from the beginning He declares His presence among the children of men. "At sundry times, and in divers manners He spoke in times past to the fathers."¹ To Moses He commanded, "Speak to the children of Israel, and they shall build Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them."² "And the cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it . . . the majesty of the Lord shining."³ and "the cherubim spread forth their wings over the ark, and covered it."⁴ And Solomon made "figures of cherubims" on the walls and doors of the temple.⁵ Now "if the ministration of death was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be in glory? For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is in glory."⁶ The old law was the shadow of the good things to come. If in the imperfect dispensation God gave so many signs and tokens of His presence, and if He willed the cherubim to overshadow the tabernacle of old, and to be shown on the walls and doors of

¹ Heb. 1. 1.² Exod. 25. 8.³ Ibid. 40. 32.⁴ Exod. 37. 9.⁵ 3 Kings 8. 7.⁶ 2 Cor. 3. 7-11.

the temple, was it not all meant to show forth the realities of the new order under Christ our Lord, the reality of His Divine presence, and the reality of the angelic choirs surrounding Him? What a centre of attraction our Blessed Lord's hidden presence becomes in the Catholic Church. How He draws the hearts of His children around Him. What would be a gorgeous Church—what a Convent Chapel, without the charm of the hidden presence? Would youths become priests, and bright maidens enter enclosed life, if our Lord was not there in their midst? “How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord; Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord. One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.”¹

II. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest act in the world, being the oblation of our Lord Himself for His own great ends, and the vast needs of souls. It is always the central act of worship in the Catholic religion. It is a going straight to God through Jesus Christ. “No man cometh to the Father but by Me.”² Our Lord offers Himself to His Eternal Father, and we offer ourselves with Him. We owe great debts to God—alone, by our own efforts, we cannot pay them—how can we presume to look at God, alone? Should we not have to say

¹ Ps. 83. 1. 2. &c.

² S. John 14. 6.

with the Psalmist, *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me* ? But in the Mass, we are with our Blessed Lord. He comes to us then to take us with Him before the throne of God, and we shelter our miseries under His merits. We may be very quiet as the Mass goes on. Is it not enough to know that our Lord is there—our Priest, and Victim—showing forth His death until He come ; and that He wills us to be there with Him ? Let us always be in union with our Blessed Lord's great intentions—adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction, supplication ; and these also are the four great debts we owe to God—alone we cannot pay them. With our Lord we do it. How well we may thus entertain ourselves with Him during the Mass, sharing His merits and intentions, and all this with much liberty of spirit, each one according to His lights, and drawings. The four great ends will naturally serve us during Mass, and the liturgy agrees with them so well. Praise and adoration may readily engage us till the Gospel, the *Gloria in excelsis*, bespeaking them so exactly. Thanksgiving will bring us to the elevation, the opening of the "Preface" inviting us to lift up our hearts, and give thanks to God. Satisfaction for sin comes from the elevation to the Communion, when our Lord is there as the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world ;" and the concluding prayers help us in petitions and intercession. Both devotion and zeal will be awakened if we remember

the thousands of altars at which the Mass is going on day and night throughout the world, thus counteracting the wickedness perpetually rising from earth to heaven. But we who live in the house of God, and assist at the tremendous Sacrifice daily, passing so perpetually the tabernacle of the Hidden Presence, have to remember that there is such a thing as familiarity with holy things; and if our faith and love be not well nourished, and if we do not constantly train ourselves to act from principle, we soon act customably, heedlessly, then hastily, and irreverently; and acts make habits. Let us strive for the spirit of our state. "Take heed, and beware, lest at any time thou forget the Lord thy God, and neglect His commandments, and judgments, and ceremonies."¹ We must neither forget the majesty of the Divine presence, nor be negligent in the ceremonies of Divine service. *Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, for ever.*²

III. Our Lord, in His Sacramental Life, not only wills to abide with us in the tabernacle, and to offer Himself for us in the Mass, but He wills to possess us one by one, and this, by being the food of our souls in holy Communion.

This tells us that we have a Divine life within us, being raised by grace to a certain participation of the Divine nature, as S. Peter says, "Grace to you, and peace, in the knowledge of God, and of Christ Jesus our Lord; by whom

¹ Deut. 8. 11.² Ps. 93. 5.

He hath given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature.”¹ This Divine life within is to put us in proportion to our ultimate destiny, that the means may be proportioned to the end ; that as our end is the participation of God’s own everlasting life and happiness, so the means to gain this may be by Divine living here below ; and this is given by grace, and the infused virtues, which lift the soul to the favour and friendship of God, and the life of love with Him. This being so, the Divine Eucharistic food is given to sustain the Divine life within : for between life and food there must be proportion also ; and as all our spiritual life of grace and love is through our Lord, so He wills that its sustenance should be through Him also, and thus for Divine life He gives Divine food. What a care our Lord God has for us all. He knows He is the only Good, and that we are nothing apart from Him : yet He wills to make us sharers of His goodness. Nor will our Lord stop at hiding and humbling Himself to get possession of His kingdom within us. It is this will to gain us to Himself that moves Him to the invention of this mystery of love.

We see how marvellously the holy Communion thus becomes the extension and adaptation of our Lord’s Incarnation. See how He continues herein His active life for the salvation of souls. Consider the thousands of living Ciboriums through-

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.

out the world, wherefrom our hidden Lord makes His entrance into souls, and works therein the marvels of His grace. See Him go to one by one as they surround His altar rails—then forth from the Church to the sick and dying, night and day—see Him in the hands of His faithful priests, travelling along the country, or in the busy ways of crowded cities, and the long corridors of hospital and prison. It is our Lord's active life among the souls of men, drawing, healing, cleansing them; purifying, illuminating, perfecting them.

His suffering life He also in some way maintains in this Sacrament of love. What irreverences, what indignities, what sacrileges, what profanations, what awful treatments He endures, as He endured indeed in His Passion, and as He endures in the body of His Church, and in the persons of many faithful children from time to time. Yet for the sake of His work among souls, and their spiritual gain and benefit, He wills to endure it—for love sacrifices itself for those it loves.

Let us always be in union with our Lord's Sacramental Life throughout the world, in all our prayers, works, and intentions. Let us go to Him, in the tabernacle, in the Mass, and in Holy Communion, with real preference of heart, feeling that His Divine presence is more precious to our souls than all external things together.

XX

OUR BLESSED LADY, THE ANGELS, AND SAINTS

GOD willed in His wonderful scheme for the redemption of the world to lift up our human nature to the closest relation with Himself, both in its manhood and its womanhood ; that as it had fallen both in man and woman in the first Adam and Eve, so it might be restored to its full dignity in the second Adam, and the second Eve—and that thus all mankind might have a perfect and a model man, and a perfect and a model woman.

The dignity to which woman has been raised by the Divine Maternity of Mary is altogether unique, whether we look at God's creatures in heaven or on earth. What can compare with it ? Neither patriarchs, nor prophets, nor apostles, nor martyrs, nor angels or archangels, nor cherubim and seraphim, can be found in any ways approaching it. For to which of the angels said He at any time, 'Thou art My Mother' ? " Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation " ? ¹ But when we say that

¹ Heb. i. 14.
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the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us," and that the flesh of His sacred humanity with which He was to redeem the world—which made the all-perfect human form of the God-Man—was taken from the flesh of His chosen Mother, and made from her substance, we begin to see something of her supereminent position in the Divine economy. Thus, the Virgin-Mother of our dear Redeemer—

"All hearts are touched and softened at her name"

—takes, by God's will, the first place among all His pure, beautiful creatures, whether in heaven or on earth—and this, on account of her closeness to God, and her relationship to each Person of the Holy Trinity—seeing that the nearer anything is to its source, the brighter and the purer it must be.

I. As we all easily and naturally love God's beautiful works, both in nature and grace, and as we are irresistibly drawn to esteem and love the best forms and types of humanity, both in man and woman—in the whole womanhood of our nature we must certainly go first to the Virgin-Mother of our Lord, and see her as the second Eve—the head of all womankind, the perfect and the model woman. How sublime must have been our Blessed Lady's sanctity to prepare and dispose her for her exalted office. Hence her Immaculate Conception. And as the first Eve had no original sin, it was by all manner

of means fitting that the second Eve should have none too. Thus the Mother of our Lord begins her existence with perfection attained. Other saints strive for perfection, and advance to it little by little—Mary begins with it. “Her foundations are on the holy mountains”¹—that is, on the heights of perfection. Yet with all this she advanced *de virtute in virtutem*, because “the path of the just goeth forward, and increaseth to perfect day.”² Therefore perfect souls are always in progress, getting nearer and nearer to God. But who can conceive the ineffable closeness of our Lady’s union with God, and her most intimate possession—might we not say embrace—of the Divine presence itself? That presence to which holy souls advance so gradually in the ways of prayer was in Mary’s direct and immediate possession, and who shall speak of her intimate enjoyment thereof? It is the theme rather of heaven than of earth, rather of angels than of men. “Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God.”³ In the early stages of the Incarnation our Lady was the city wherein the God-Man dwelt; the tabernacle of God on earth; the Ark of the covenant; the Seat of wisdom, the morning star, the Tower of David, the Gate of heaven. No one creature in the whole history of the world, from the beginning to the end, save only Mary, has had such Divine experience as this. What must have been

¹ Ps. 86. 1.² Prov. 4. 18.³ Ps. 86. 3.

her inmost joys and colloquies with her Divine Guest? what the height of her contemplation? what the pourings of light and love divine upon her soul? And consider the new phases of the Divine presence to her, and her enjoyment thereof, in the entrance of the God-Man into the world through her, and of His willing dependence for all His needs on her; His life-nourishment from her life; and His care and keeping, given altogether over to her. Oh what must have been the brightness, the purity, the perfection of her soul, to fit her for all these closest, Divinest ministrations? And years go by, and our Lord is still in close dependence on her. Who can He have loved among all the creatures of God in heaven and earth with anything like the love He had for His Mother?

And then our Lord went forth to teach the world, and then to suffer and die for the salvation of men. And as Mary is the Mother of the Redeemer, so she is the Mother of the redeemed; and as we are all in relation to our Lord, so we are all in relation to her; and as Eve is the mother of the living in the order of nature, so Mary is the Mother of the living in the order of grace. And at the solemn moment of the consummation of our Lord's sacrifice for the salvation of men on Calvary, when all was so representative, little that He spoke, He looked on His mother, and S. John, who represented humanity, giving one to the other, "Behold thy

son—behold thy mother.” “And from that hour the disciple took her to his own”; and from that hour the Mother of Jesus is the Mother of men.

II. Our Lord God has arranged a wonderful ministration of angels for the benefit of the children of men here below. It is in the realm of grace, as in that of nature—God using the agency of other creatures on our behalf, and through them supplying our manifold needs. From the very beginning we see angels in the midst of men; nor can we doubt that there is an unseen world around us, as well as the world we see. As S. Paul says, “We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.”¹ There were cherubims appointed to guard the tree of life in paradise. Angels spoke to Agar, Abraham, Lot, and Jacob; and Jacob saw angels ascending and descending. To Moses God says, “I will send My angel to go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey. Observe him, and hear his voice, My name is in him.”² Gideon saw an angel face to face. An angel conversed with Manne and his wife, and they fell flat on the ground. Elias was fed by an angel. Tobias was befriended by the archangel. Isaias was touched by a seraph. Daniel was touched by Gabriel swiftly flying, and fell to the ground. David saw an angel standing between heaven and earth, and he fell flat to the earth. Ezechiel

¹ 2 Cor. 9. 18.

² Exod. 23. 20.

had a vision of cherubim. Zachary saw an angel standing at the side of the altar. Then there are angels of the Annunciation and the Nativity, when there was a "multitude of the heavenly host praising God"; of the Agony in the garden, and of the Resurrection, "His countenance as lightning, and His raiment as snow." S. John the Apostle saw many angels, as he tells us in the Apocalypse. Finally, "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."¹ How very mysterious it seems, that these bright, intellectual spirits should be apportioned off by God to attend to the wants of poor human beings here on earth. Might they not ask for some more fitting employment in the courts of heaven? But their appointment is to poor sinful men here below, and they see our human nature exalted above themselves in Jesus and Mary, yet they complain not, because they are full of the love of God above all. "Nothing tastes better to the highest angel than to do God's will in all things, so that if he knew that God willed him to come down to earth and root up nettles and weeds, this would be for him of all things the most desirable to perform."² It was probably part of the angels' trial to foresee all these things; and some would not serve—an awful sin against the light, and proceeding from pride of intellect.

¹ Ps. 90. 11.² Hen. Suso., "Etern. Wisdom," c. 9.

The dear angels' guardian must often, if we may say it, be sorrowful at their want of success among the souls of men on earth. With all their love and care they see us going wrong. How many lights, how many graces are lost; how little we think of them, and love them, in return for all they do for us; and they see souls becoming worse and worse, and going straight and swift to perdition. What account will the angel give when his work for the soul is over? He will still be full of peace and love. He has been doing what God willed him to do, and his life and joy is to please God. As our Lord said of Himself, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."¹ But we know what joy the angels have at the conversion of even one sinner. So, certainly, the nearer we get to God by inner purity of soul, the more the angels will enjoy themselves with us. St. Hilary tells us that angels preside at the prayers of the faithful; and we can understand how part of their enjoyment among the children of men on earth would be to stand near to pure souls, and see their own brightness reflected therein.

III. The Communion of Saints signifies the common union that exists between all the members of the Church militant on earth, the Church triumphant in heaven, and the Church suffering in Purgatory. As therefore we are associated with the angels, so also we are with

¹ S. John 4. 34.

the saints, and with the holy souls departed. Our Lord is the head of both angels and men, and He loves to be surrounded with them all, both in heaven and on earth, being "above all principality, power, virtue, dominion, and every name that is named in this world, and that which is to come." ¹ As therefore we honour and love Him, so we honour and love them, as united with Him everlastingly. How different the saints are, how diversified in their lives and works, yet their inner spirit is ever one and the same. "There are diversities of graces, but the same spirit, and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all." ² The essence of sanctity is in the inner spirit, not the outer work. The Spirit of God inhabiting the soul, sanctifies it—outer works are accidental, and differ with different states and callings. This tells us that sanctity is within reach of all. The soul and God united in the life of mutual love—this is sanctity. Then, love works in a thousand different ways—"All these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will." ³ Thus, in the Saints there is always unity in diversity—one principle and many operations. "And God fulfils Himself in many ways." Look at S. Joseph. What a quiet, simple, humble, homely life. We see no grand externals at Nazareth, but a life of love

¹ Eph. i. 21.² 1 Cor. 12. 4.³ Ibid. 11.

and contemplation, and close union with God, and detachment from the world. The patriarchs and prophets were men of God, under the governance of His Spirit, and from the abundance of their contemplation moving zealously to action for the benefit of God's people. The apostles were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," and from that inner Divine life they went forth to win souls to Christ, giving their lives for God and the Church. The martyrs were "all for God," taking torments and death for the sake of His truth and love. The fathers of the desert speak again of sanctity from within. The great fathers of the Church were wondrous as men of contemplation and action combined, given to God in prayer, yet having "acute and ready minds, instinctive tact and decision in conducting matters, as well as boldness and zeal; with large plans, and persuasive and attractive bearing. Such was the majestic Ambrose—such the never-wearied Athanasius."¹ The founders of religious Orders, Benedict, and Bernard, Dominic, Francis, Ignatius, Teresa, were as stars of the first magnitude, bright and leading spirits, drawing countless saints and holy souls around them.

Sanctity indeed is always a note of Holy Church; in the priestly life, in the lives of so many of the religious orders dedicated to God's love and service, and the service of their neighbour; and in the hidden lives of the faithful

¹ Newman, "Church of the Fathers," c. 7.

children of the Church, by grace and charity, and the fulfilment of the ordinary works of daily life.

With God's ineffable purity, however, it is very difficult even for saintly souls to be altogether under the habitual influence of the Spirit of God. With the excitement of external things, and the constant activity of the natural powers, both thoughts and affections are continually acted upon, so that souls quite pure and purified are hardly to be expected here below. Hence the life in Purgatory hereafter where the process of purification begun here is finished there. And for many this will probably mean another long life. However, let us remember that Purgatory is a realm of love : God's love is supreme there—mutual love runs through all, nor is there any place for sin. Probably angels and saints may visit the holy souls, but of such things we cannot speak with certainty—we may infer from the doctrine of the Communion of Saints that it might be so.

Let us learn from all these things to awaken our faith in the unseen world ; and let us strive to realise the intimate relationship of communion that exists between our Blessed Lord and all in the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant.

XXI

THE DIVINE OFFICE

*CONFITEBOR Tibi Domine in toto corde meo.*¹ We must awaken our faith and love when we come to the Divine office of the Church. As the Mass is our Blessed Lord's Prayer, and we go therein to God through Him, so the Divine office is the perpetual prayer of Holy Mother Church, and we are represented therein by her to God ; thus our Blessed Lord represents us, and the Church represents us, day by day, and hour by hour, in all the different parts of the Catholic world, by the Mass, and the Divine office : and in this great union of Prayer in all the Catholic Churches, and religious houses, with the priesthood, and all in holy orders, we must reckon our constant association with the angels and saints, believing, as S. Teresa says, that "Where the King is, there is the court."² So as we stand in choir before our Lord's hidden presence in the tabernacle, we cannot but feel that He, who is the King of angels, will have His escort with Him ; nor can we doubt that having given His angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways, these faithful, loving

¹ Ps. 110. 1.

² "Way of Perf.," c. 28.

spirits will be near us, and find it their joy in their work on earth to blend our prayers and praises with their own. Hence, the Psalmist, *In conspectu Angelorum psallam Tibi*.¹

I. The Divine office, being the solemn appointment of the Church, put by her upon her priests, and children of religious orders, must be considered as a Divine ordinance. It is therefore called *opus Dei*, or the work of God to be done. Thus it enters into our state of life. As such we must love it, and do it from the heart, for God, and for the Church, and all her intentions.

As in the Mass, so in the Divine office, we cast our eyes over the world. We desire that God may be praised, loved, and served ; but we see the wickedness of men rising up so awfully from earth to heaven, and we feel that there *must* be a balance on the side of God and good. We at once rejoice to see it. All around the world, day and night, there is our Lord's great oblation ; there are angelic choirs to do Him homage, and there are the ceaseless praises of the Divine office from thousands of human lips and hearts, souls consecrated to the love and service of God—*Jubilate Deo omnis terra*. "Sing joyfully to God, all the earth ; serve the Lord with gladness. Come into His presence with exceeding joy. Know ye that the Lord, He is God ; He hath made us, and not we ourselves. Go ye into His gates with praise, into His courts

¹ Ps. 137. 2.

with hymns, and give glory to Him. Praise His name, for the Lord is sweet; His mercy endureth for ever, and His truth from generation to generation.”¹

It will help us much to remember that in the Divine office we praise God, and entreat Him in His own words, and in the words of the Church. Thus let us say it again, we are represented by our Lord, and we are represented by the Church. When we pray in our own words we represent ourselves. *Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet.*² We are as the trumpets of God when we stand in His presence, and send up His words from earth to heaven “blowing sweet notes of spiritual praise and prayer to Him.”³ We must aim at the “full accord of mouth and heart”⁴ lest our Lord should say, “This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”⁵ To get to this, we must train ourselves to see the Divine meaning underlying the words of God in Holy Scripture. For this we need the best spiritual principles; for principles are as eyesight by which we see. If we realise the greatness of God—His presence around and within us, His love as our motor power, His law as declared in so many ways, His word, and His will to be done, our nothingness and dependence on Him, our Lord’s presence in our midst, the work of

¹ Ps. 99.

² Isaias 58. 1.

³ From Hilton.

⁴ “Ut hoc versetur in corde quod profertur in ore” (S. Aug. Reg.).

⁵ S. Matt. 15. 8.

our perfection by gradual progress—these are principles, and they enable us to see God's meaning when He speaks to us in the words of Holy Writ. *Pater noster* speaks at once the whole work of mutual love between the soul and God, which is the work of perfection, for our heavenly Father loves us, and we love Him, and we love one another. By the word *noster*, *our* and not *my* Father. Every sentence of the *Pater* bespeaks the love of God, and of one another; the first half, the love of God, the second, our charity to others. *Levavi oculos meos ad montes*—in a spiritual sense mountains signify the heights of perfection, as towering heavenwards, and away from the din of the world. *Portio mea Domine, dixi, custodire legem tuam*. My portion is to keep the law of God. The law applies primarily to the law of love, and is then carried on to the word of God however spoken, to the laws of our state, to our vows, and our rules. It is our portion—that is, our inheritance, our privilege, our pleasure, to live according to law, order, and rule, and as I keep my rules, I am enjoying my portion. All through the Psalm *Beati immaculati*, in the four little hours, there is a word corresponding to *lex*, and its application in this way, with much freedom of spirit, will be constant refreshment to the soul. *In lege Domini voluntas ejus*. My will must be in the law of the Lord—that is, wherever I recognise the will of God, there is the law to my soul; God's will is in my

state of life ; the office to which I am appointed is the will of God. My vows are God's will ; my rules His will. Therefore my will is there also. I *will* to do my duty ; I *will* to keep my rule. If we do not bring our wills into accord with God's will—there is anarchy.

A very helpful rule in finding spiritual interpretation for the words of Scripture is given in a sermon *De Laude Caritatis*, from S. Augustine. It is as follows—"In what you understand in Scripture, love is clearly seen. In what you understand not, love lies hid. So that by holding to love, you hold both to that which is seen, and that which is hidden in the Divine word." ¹ Hilton calls this the "heavenly" sense of Scripture, which "belongeth only to the working of love, and that is, when all truth in Holy Writ is applied to love." ² To many simple religious souls these thoughts would seem to bring a fund of spiritual help in the reading of Scripture ; and they agree with Pascal when he says, "Holy Scripture is not a science of the *mind*, but of the *heart*, and it is unintelligible save to those whose heart is right. All others find in it darkness only." ³

II. Our interest and relish in the recitation of the Divine office will be much increased by offering it for God's own great ends, and the vast needs of souls ; and doing this in some

¹ S. Aug., Sermon, 350.

² "Scale of Perfection," P. 3, c. 13.

³ From *Pensées*.

definite and systematic way, as we are accustomed to do in assisting at Mass. We might always in general have the same four great intentions for the office that we have for the Mass. But in all this there is room for much liberty of spirit.

It will help us to distribute certain leading intentions among the Nocturns and hours. There are three Nocturns, and three Psalms in each little hour. In like manner there are three principal intentions to be had habitually ; these are the conversion of sinners, the dying, and the souls in Purgatory. Then there are three classes of sinners to be converted, the heathen, heretics, and bad Catholics. Again, the life of the Church needs sustaining in three principal departments, the Episcopate, the Priesthood, and the Religious Orders. There are also three pressing dangers to the Church nowadays, Agnosticism, Educationalism, and Secret Societies. Then the Holy Father always has special claims on our thoughts and prayers, as bearing the brunt of the battle for us all. The conversion of England has always to be remembered, and the state of France being so terrific, we should make special provision for her ; and indeed the other nations, too, in Europe, Russia, and the far East. And in all this intercessory prayer, we must be in constant union with our Lord in the Mass, with the angels and saints, and with the Church throughout the world, in all her offices and devotions.

The present needs of the Church militant, and all her faithful laity, who have done so much in troublous times to keep, as though by Catholic instinct, to the Church's living faith and tradition,¹ might daily form the principal intention at Vespers; and the Divine protection of the Church in her daily warfare with the world, would be suitable as the Compline intention. And thus, when we say the words *Miserere mei, In te Domine speravi, Ipse liberavit me*, and the like, instead of taking the words personally, we make ourselves the mouthpiece of the Church, and so give them all to her. Needless to say, for all special occasions and intentions, we arrange as we like, with much liberty of spirit, often remembering the great union of the Church together throughout the world, with our Divine Lord, our Blessed Lady, the Angels, and the Saints.

III. The mode of reciting the office brings us to further practical suggestions. *Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua*. The words of God should be ever sweet to the mouth; and we must try to enjoy them *in præsenti*, while we are saying them—not thinking of the past, or the future, but the present—remembering that we are *hic et nunc* the Church's mouthpiece. Every one should train himself to good pronunciation both in public, and in private. The words were made to be said. We are serving

¹ This was specially so, as Newman tells us, in Arian times.

God and the Church, and we should serve them well. Those who have a true liturgical spirit and interior spirit of love with it, who cultivate the spirit of their state, by the love of its duties, will love every syllable to be said, and every note to be sung, and will find therein throughout God's will to be done. How truly sweet the notes and the words then become, as Hilton says, "Every word is sounded savourly, sweetly, and delectably, with full accord of mouth and heart, inflaming and enlightening the powers of the soul; and the body is as an instrument and a trumpet of the soul, blowing sweet notes of spiritual prayers to God."¹

Besides attending to the notes, words, and syllables, and offering all up for the Church, and her intentions, those understanding Latin will naturally enjoy the sense of the words; finding, as already said, many hidden meanings by means of faith and love; and their various intentions in hand will often be expressed by the words used, and be found to fit very exactly. Thus if offering the *Miserere* for the conversion of England, the word *mei* will of course go to England, the same with *amplius lava me*, and so of the rest.

Religious souls and all whose main work is interior cultivation and progress will often be drawn to attend immediately to God Himself, to our Lord's presence, to our Blessed Lady, or the

¹ "Scale of Perf.," P. 3, c. 12.

Angels and Saints, instead of engaging themselves directly with the sense of the words, although they will often be touched and moved by certain words that say so much, in the midst of their higher engagements. But "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." ¹

Sit laus plena, sit sonora, sit jucunda, sit decora, mentis jubilatio. *Plena*—that is, let us pronounce the words fully, and with full heart. Familiarity with holy things makes them often go—shall we say? cheaply. The constant habit of saying and doing the same things, unless we keep at our training, easily induces a heedless way of getting through them. This means want of spirit, want of heart, want of love, want of principle: want of self-culture, training, and discipline: and acts make habits. We get familiar with our Lord's presence, and thus our praises in the choir, and even our prayers at the altar, are without heart and love, gone through customably. "I find not thy works full before God." ²

Sit sonora.—Said, or sung with the right musical tone and expression. Care, and taste, are of course needed here, and many have not the ability for the work. *Operatio sequitur esse.* One unsonorous voice is enough to mar a whole choir. *Malum ex quocunque defectu.* A word suffices for a wise man.

Jucunda.—Let all be agreeable and pleasing in their ways when assisting at the solemn

¹ 2 Cor. 3. 17.

² Apoc. 3. 2.

offices of the Church. They must study their behaviour in the service of God as carefully as they do in the society of the world. Do they enter the choir with the same proper care they would enter the drawing-room—with measured step, and modest eyes, and due consideration for all present? They ought to be on their dignity in the Church as well as in the world. If we found ourselves before the king and his court, every instinct would tell us to be at our best: and so it should be before the presence of our Lord and the angels.

Decora.—"Let all things be done decently and in order" is the Apostolic law.¹ Decorum is a natural virtue, and is demanded in society; and supernatural virtues do not dispense with the natural. When people of the world come to Church, they expect things to be as well done there as they are among themselves, and when they see the ceremonies of the Church carried out religiously and reverently, they are thereby edified and subdued. But quick are they to notice anything of indecorum that may be observable in the service of the sanctuary. Josephus tells us how when the Queen of Sheba saw the splendour of Solomon's palace, notwithstanding the magnificence of the apartments, and their surroundings, yet she was specially "affected by the daily sacrifices offered to God, and the reverence of the priests and servers about them.

¹ 1 Cor. 14. 40.

When she saw this done every day she was in the greatest admiration, and openly confessed how wonderfully she was affected.”¹

Doubtless the perfection of all our external works depends on the habit of interior virtue, like all effects depend on their causes; so that if the exterior is to be reformed, the interior must be reformed. Much, too, depends on natural cultivation; and those of cultured natures will more easily and naturally incline to dignity and reverence in their outer bearing and comportment. Yet grace supplies for much; and earnest faith and love, with careful thought, and good will-power, intent on serving and pleasing God, with a habit of devotion to the Divine presence, which does so much—and we will add, since nature and grace work so closely together, a little honest pride, and something of the *esprit de corps* in community life, will bring us to the desire of doing “all things well;” “providing good things, not only before God, but also before men.”²

¹ Vol. 2, B. 8, c. 6.

² Rom. 12. 17.

XXII

THE VOWS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

WE must always keep clearly in mind the distinction between end and means. The vows are not the end of religious life, but adopted and adapted means for attaining the end. The end of the religious life is the perfection of the love of God, commonly called by Divines perfect charity.¹ Union with God by perfect love being the end of our creation, we thus see that by entering Religion our end is what it was before—for truly there cannot be two ends of creation. What we do by becoming Religious is to take additional means to the end, and to bind ourselves for life to the use of them. The Christian life provides sufficient means for gaining the end if we chose to make good use of them. But with all the weakness of nature, the temptations of the world, and the activities of life, there are many who find the risks too great, and feel the need of extra helps in progressing to the end of perfect love. This moves them to the religious life, and there they find the very special and

¹ "*Ipsa perfectio caritatis est finis status religionis*" (S. Thom. 2. 2, Q. 186, A. 2).

effectual helps they sought. Thus their end is unchanged, but their means are largely augmented.

I. The vow of poverty is a distinct means for helping the soul towards the perfection of love, and this by removing those impediments in the way of love to God, which arise from attachments to external things.¹ For it is evident that the riches and commodities of life very largely engage the thoughts and affections of those who hold and use them, and with all this engagement they are hardly free for the exercises of perfect love to God. Those therefore who become Religious, by one stroke of the vow of poverty, cut away the ties that held their souls to earth ; then they are able to go forward to God free from worldly trammels. Thus poverty is seen to be instrumental to perfect charity. As therefore we desire to gain the end, we must love to use the means. Let us see how a good religious will carry out his vow.

1. He renounces all dominion over temporal goods, so that he may not, in any right of his own, receive, give, retain, destroy things ; though he may have the use of them with leave of the Superior.

2. Things offered or sent to a religious must be notified to the Superior, and with leave may be used ; but they are not to be asked for without leave given, or presumed. When away from the

¹ S. Thom. 2. 2, Q. 186, A. 1, ad 4 and A. 7, ad. 1 and 2.

convent a religious has to keep his account *de datis, et expensis*, submitting them to his Superior on his return.

3. Besides observing the letter of his vow, a good religious will always cultivate its spirit, seeing that the vows are instrumental to the progress of the soul in the way of love to God.¹ A brief rule for the cultivation of religious poverty is given by Blossius, as follows—"Be poor in things, but poorer still in affection to things."² Poverty in things is the riddance of superfluities; and poverty in affection to things, the detachment of the heart from whatever we may have for use. "Mere external departure from the world," said the Abbot Paphnutius, "will not profit without the inward renunciation of the heart. What will it avail to despise the substance of the world, if I do not eradicate from my heart depraved affections, and plant in their place the love of God."³ Again, as the "Imitation" says, "Some at first offer all, and then return to what they left."⁴ "It is little matter," as Cassian tells us, "for a religious to have renounced all things at the commencement of his conversion if he does not persevere in this disposition, and renounce them every day."⁵ And once more, we find sometimes those who have renounced great things, remaining attached to small ones. They

¹ S. Thom., Opusc. "cont. retrah. a relig.," c. 6.

² *Spec. Mon., C. de Mortif.*

⁴ B. 3, c. 37.

³ Cassian, Conf. 3, c. 7.

⁵ Ibid, c. 24, 2.

leave the world, and keep a tight hold over a picture or a knife. Who will be found to renounce all things? Yet this it is that secures the pearl of great price.

II. Chastity, like poverty, is another chosen means for attaining the end. Our aim is to go forward to the union of perfect love with God; with this in view, we rid ourselves of the many impediments on the way, arising from attachments to external things, by taking the vow of poverty. Having done this, we are aware that impediments are not only without, but within us. It would not be easy to give our hearts wholly to God by perfect love, if the love of creature and fleshly pleasure had hold of us; seeing, as S. Peter says, that "carnal desires war against the soul."¹ Thus it is that those who dedicate themselves to God in religious life add the vow of chastity to that of poverty to free themselves from attachments and fleshly tendencies, which by engaging so much their thoughts, desires, and affections, hinder their progress in the way of love to God. Hence the angelic Doctor tells us that "the way of continence is more especially requisite for the attainment of perfection."² By the vow of chastity a religious dedicated to God renounces any and every indulgence of the *lustful* spirit by thought, word, or deed. Of course nature has her laws as well as grace, and those who by grace bind themselves to continence for

¹ 1 Pet. 2. 11.

² Opusc. "*de Perfec., Vit. Sp.*," c. 8.

the sake of the higher love, thereby put a bridle on nature. This, however, does not hinder nature from asserting herself at times, although by discipline and use, the spirit gradually gets the ascendancy over the flesh, so that the laws of the flesh are brought into due subjection to those of the spirit. Perhaps the primary means of accomplishing this is to keep the higher powers of the soul well engaged, intellectually and spiritually ; as S. Augustine puts it, "If you cleave to the higher, you shall subdue the lower." ¹ And S. Jerome, "Love the study of the Scriptures, and you will not go to sensual love." ² Nature's activities will run somewhere. Engage them with higher things, and they seek not the lower. Plenty of good manual work will serve in the same way, especially when combined with spiritual life, and the thought of the Divine presence around and within us. It is those who love idleness that are caught up by the flesh. But the conflict between flesh and spirit is part of the warfare of life. Hence in the quick movements of temptation the spirit must learn to move quickly too ; for, as S. Paul says, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to the other." ³ Therefore if the flesh is quick, the

¹ "Si adhærebis Superiori, conculcabis inferiora" (Enar. in Ps. 45).

² "Ama scientiam Scripturarum, et carnis vitia non amabis" (Ep. 125, *ad Rustic*).

³ Gal. 5. 17.

spirit must be quick ; and acts make habits ; and after fair practice, the spirit gradually gets the upper hand, and the flesh is subdued thereto ; and if the lower life asserts itself, the higher life asserts itself, and thus the higher governs the lower. " If you live according to the flesh, you shall die ; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." ¹ When the flesh tends to sin, the spirit should go to God. Its first word should be an act of love, because love is preference. Therefore when the flesh loves itself, the spirit should love God, and thus the higher gains the victory. It is as the two scales of the balance, when one goes up, the other goes down.

It may be well to add that the vow of chastity which renounces the lustful spirit, in thought, word, and deed, is not necessarily injured by intellectual or artistic bearings on the virtue, as S. Paul says, " To the pure, all things are pure." ² After all, the human frame is a masterpiece of Divine wisdom, and its many needs must be considered and attended to. " There is an exquisite subtlety, and the same is unjust." ³ And there is a false modesty, and the same is unwise.

III. Going onwards to our ultimate end, and ridding ourselves of impediments thereto, arising from external things, by poverty, and from the inner inclinations of nature, by chastity, we know that most of all the spirit is prevented from

¹ Rom. 8. 13.

² Titus 1. 15.

³ Ecclus. 19. 22.

rising upwards to God, by the constant clinging to its own self-will and love. In view therefore of securing the Divine will in place of self-will, the religious takes the third vow of obedience, and by this means gets the guarantee of living "according to God," instead of "according to man." Thus is the religious soul, so to say, fully equipped for progressing consistently through life to its ultimate end of union with God by perfect love.

The beauty and the value of obedience arise from its representing to us the will of God to be done. "There is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God."¹ Thus it is that all rightly established authority represents Divine authority, whether in the natural or the spiritual order. Children obey their parents, servants their masters, subjects of the realm the civil power, and children of the Church their ecclesiastical Superiors. "Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."² We have constantly to remember that the whole of our religious life is based upon the laws of Christianity and Catholicism, and that what we undertake in religion, we take by way of addition, and not subtraction. Therefore, a Superior, whoever he may be, is a sacred person, by reason of his office. As he represents the presence and authority of God, so he should represent also the mind of God—"Let this mind be in you, which

¹ Rom. 13. 1.² Rom. 13. 2.

was also in Christ Jesus”¹—and govern his subjects “according to God,” not “according to man.” But even if he should govern “according to man,” it is still “according to God” for subjects to obey, and this on account of his official capacity. A policeman may not be a good man personally, but when he lifts his arm to bar the way, he acts officially—he represents the powers that be—and all, even to nobles and princes, obey him. Thus all should have a special devotion to obedience on account of its bringing them, and giving them, the will of God to be done. For what is the purpose of our being, but to do the will of God?

There is certainly an instinct in nature to obey that runs through every sphere of life. We have all been born and bred to it from the first; from the hands of parents we passed to teachers, then to college discipline, then to large institutions whether of the world or Church—army, navy, civil service, priesthood, religious life; and in all, from first to last it is the same—there is authority and obedience. Neither the world, nor the Church, nor society, nor the family can subsist without them. Well does Newman say that “The essence of religion is authority and obedience.”² Remembering all this when we come into religion, it certainly helps us to appreciate and love the obedience proper to our state. Sad it would be if we found less of the

¹ Phil. 2. 5.

² “Developm.,” c. 2, S. 2. 11.

virtue among religious than we see of it among the children of the world. Certainly they do give us good object-lessons in the way of obedience. Look at the soldiers and the sailors. See there—the charge of Balaclava! Cannon to right of them, cannon to left of them. But listen! There is the word. Authority speaks. Maybe some one has blundered. But the word is given—and “into the jaws of death rode the six hundred!” There is the authority and obedience of the world—. What lessons of obedience we have in servants towards their masters and mistresses. Yes, and from the animals too; look at the horse and the dog—at the word of the master they stand, or they run; in rain or in heat they labour hard, or they stay quiet at home, just as they are told. And yet more; look at the splendid obedience of nature to the word of God. *Ipse dixit, et facta sunt*—Let there be light, and light came forth. Let sun, moon, earth, and stars be in their appointed places, and they are there, day by day, to the minute; absolutely subject to God’s will; never behind time—punctuality to the moment. Does a Superior tell you to do something which is very hard? But remember the grace, the blessing, the merit of doing God’s will. It is certainly not so hard as the charge of Balaclava. Look to Abraham for a hard obedience. Does he reason why? does he make reply? God says it; that is enough; and God blessed and re-

warded him though he was prepared to sacrifice his son. S. Joseph again has a hard obedience. "Get up in the night," he is told. "Arise and take the child and his mother." There is the order of obedience. We don't find S. Joseph asking to wait till morning, or in any sort of way grumbling at the order; it just says that "he rose, and took the child and his mother by night, and went into Egypt." But, above all, there is the obedience of the God-Man, who "being in the form of God, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."¹ Do religious or priests or others complain that some one is placed over them considerably inferior to themselves? What do they say? Is not the power from God? and those that are, are they not "ordained of God"?² It is the office, not the person, that is in question. But look at our Lord God, so enamoured of obedience as to place "omnipotence in bonds." There is the Eternal Wisdom obedient to Mary and Joseph: and after Him there is Mary obedient to Joseph; and there is Joseph least of the three, placed in authority over those immeasurably, or even infinitely superior to himself.

Here we have the perfect models of obedience to the entire Church and world. Who will not love to obey now? The love of our state and the fulfilment of its duties with love and fidelity

¹ Phil. 2. 7.

² Rom. 13. 1.

gives us the spirit of our state. All should love to obey, because all should love to please God by doing His will. We must train ourselves more and more to see the presence of God, the will of God, the love of God, the service of God, and the word of God to be done, whenever authority speaks. If we realise all this, the instinct of love quickly moves us to obey promptly, easily, and sweetly; which gives the finishing touch to the work. And, finally, we must remember that the exercise of obedience to those placed over us here is to train and form us to the full subjection of the soul to God, in view to the ultimate end, so true it is, as the angelic Doctor teaches, that the vows of religion are means to the end, and have therefore to be used and ordered in helping the soul onwards to its union with God by perfect love.¹

¹ "Votum Religionis ordinatur sicut in finem, ad perfectionem caritatis; et omnes aliæ Religionum observantiæ ordinantur ad tria vota" (S. Thom. 2. 2, Q. 186, A. 7, ad 1 & 2).

XXIII

THE RULES

THE rules of the Order do not of themselves bind under sin—certainly not. Yet they have to be kept—certainly. Would it not however follow that because they do not bind under sin they need not be kept ?

Stated thus generally, the argument contains a fallacy, and therefore the proposition as enunciated, cannot be admitted.

Many reasons for the non-observance of rules in individual and concrete cases will easily and reasonably exist. And as right reason is a rule of life, natural law prevails over positive law ; and the positive law (of the rule), not binding under sin objectively, the good reasons alleged and admitted in particular cases become the proximate principle of action ; the law in the abstract still standing for observance when the reasons for its non-observance cease to exist.

This is a little bit of dry, technical Church science. But looking at our state of life practically, we must certainly, in common with all other professions, even in the world, strive to have the spirit of our state. This means that

we must love our state, love its duties, love to do them, and do them well.

How is it with lawyers, farmers, musicians, nurses, and others? They have the spirit of their state. They love their state, love its duties, love to do them, and do them well.

“England expects every man to do his duty.”

It ought to be the same with us.

If you ask a farmer whether he is bound under sin to mow his fields, sharpen his implements, and feed his sheep well, he would say that there's no sin about the things, but he looks to his well-being and his gains, and so tries to do his best. And so of all the rest. We ourselves, every one of us, day by day, do scores of things that do not bind under sin. We are moved to do them because they appertain to our state, because they help us on in many ways; they improve us, or exercise us, or benefit us, or increase our gains, or help on our prospects, or make us feel better for the work done.

I. As the rules of the Order belong to the state we have chosen, and are provided for us therein to help us the better to keep our vows, and to get onwards in the way to union with God, we must love to observe them, as appointed means to the end.

This is the dictate of sound reason and common-sense. It is admitted all round that those who take a state of life take the duties

that belong to it. And if they wish further to enjoy the spirit of their state, they love it from choice and principle, and delight in discharging its duties. Observe how fond a musician is of his work ; how fond a nurse is of her work ; how much an explorer loves his travels. They all have the spirit of their state ; they don't ask if things bind under sin. It is enough for them to know such things belong to their state ; and as they love their state, they love what belongs to it. Now let us see if as religious we love the religious state, if we love the Order we have chosen, if we love the duties that belong to it. The vows belong to it. Do we love them, and love to keep them ? The rules belong to our Order. They were certainly given to be kept. It would be too strange to put a book of rules into our hands, and then say, "but you need not keep them." It is truly said, indeed, that we are not bound to keep them under sin, but it is nowhere said that we are not to keep them. How, then, are they given ? They are given as means, among many other means, of advancing onwards in the way of love to God. They help us directly, as S. Thomas teaches, towards the observance of our vows, and the vows help us directly towards the perfection of charity.¹ How many little observances, for instance, there are in common life, how many little leaves required ; these help us to practise our vow of

¹ S. Thom. *sup.*

poverty. Keeping the bounds of enclosure, having to take a socius, the opening of letters, the discipline, the rules against visits, are clearly means towards the vow of chastity ; and every observance of punctuality, attendance to calls and bells, and constant submission to the word and will of the Superior, help to form us to the habit of obedience. And when a soul, anxious to advance, and striving for the ideal of perfect love, begins to train itself to act from the real principle of love, it delights to recognise in all these rules, small in themselves, appointed means belonging to its state for advancing to its end ; and as it desires to progress to the end, it desires to use the means thereto ; and as love is its end, so the exercise of love is the means thereto, and thus it keeps its rules from love, and not from fear of sin. This is just what S. Francis of Sales tells us to do. He says : “ In proportion as God’s love grows within us it will make us more and more exact in the observance of the rules, although of themselves they do not bind under sin. If they bound under death, how closely would they be observed. But ‘ love is as strong as death.’ Religious therefore will from love observe their rules.” ¹

II. The rules of religious life, although not binding of themselves under sin, yet, as belonging to our state, as approved by the Church, and as made to be kept, represent to us in our religious and spiritual life, the will of God to

¹ Conferences I.

be done. Therefore it should be our joy to observe them, and gain the grace attaching thereto.

It is enough to say that God wills us to observe the laws of our state, wills us to follow the approval of the Church, wills us to keep what was made to be kept. From the words Moses spoke to the people of old, and repeated again and again, we may surely learn something of the spirit of observance due to law. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but that thou love Him, and walk in His ways, and serve Him with all thy heart, and observe His precepts, and ceremonies, and judgments. If thou keep and do them, He will love thee and multiply thee."¹ Would it not be the height of ingratitude for us to be niggardly with God who is so generous with us? What sort of love and what sort of service would that be which said, "I am not bound to do this under sin, therefore I will not do it." Are we going to treat our Lord God in this way? How would it be if God were to treat *us* like that? If He said to us, "I am not bound to bring you to heaven;" "I am not bound to give you any more grace;" "I am not bound to give you health, nor sight, nor hearing, nor speech, nor strength, nor friends, nor honour, nor yet the warm sun, nor the bright air and the refreshing rain." Ah, we forget—we forget the constant love of God for us, His perpetual generosity, His continual thought of us, and all that He has

¹ Deut. 10. 12, 7. 11 &c.

done, does, and will do for us ; and in return He asks our hearts, and our love, and our loving service. He shows us His will. He doesn't bind us for ever under sin, lest we should be ever serving through fear. He leaves us scope for love, and lets us know that that is what He desires more than all. Oh that we should be slack in giving Him love and serving Him through love, and ever think of such a thing as cutting down our services to Him in religion to things that are of stern obligation, saying, "If they are not of obligation, they are not binding." "If I am not bound, I am not bound." God preserve us from ever dealing with Him so. "With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you."¹ Take care how you measure in the love and service of God. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly."² God puts no measure in the law of love to Himself ; therefore we have to love Him generously, and not be putting hard lines and limits to our love. "If we attempt to run ourselves upon the line of obligation, we shall damage ourselves in irremedial ways. The Divine way open to religious and priests is that of charity, holiness, and generosity."³ Moreover, how carefully and minutely God observes His own appointed laws in nature and grace. *Imitatores Dei estote.*⁴ Our rules are our appointed laws. *Tu mandasti mandata tua custodiri nimis.*⁵

¹ S. Luke 6. 38.² 2 Cor. 9. 6.³ From Bishop Ullathorne, "Eccles Discourses," vi,⁴ Eph. v. 1,⁵ Ps. 118, 4.

III. The rules are distinct means of spiritual progress in our appointed way. And as our immediate business is to advance to God in the way wherein we are called, we should take what He gives, and do our best to live and work accordingly.

Life here below is a progress to our end, and each one has to go forward. If he goes not on, he goes back ; that is, he is carried back by the strong current of human nature. If we are wise, and have our best interests at heart, why should we not, having chosen our state, make the very best of it we can ? Excellent ways and means are put into our hands of living according to our state, improving ourselves, helping our brethren, building up the life and spirit of the Order, yea, and of the Church with it, educating ourselves to the best ideals of life, and advancing well our ministrations among the faithful, all of which are greatly aided by means of regular life, rule, and discipline ; yet we use not for all these purposes the gifts and the graces that are put into our hands ; thus our lives do not fructify as they might. Are we not wasting the Master's goods ? Besides, we have a wedding garment to weave. How beautiful it might be if we worked well, and used all the precious materials offered to us in our religious life !

We have then to go forward, each in his appointed way. *Hæc est via, ambulate in ea.* "This is the way, walk ye in it." ¹ S. Augustine

¹ Isaias 30. 21.

speaks of some who run well, but out of the way.¹ It would be troubling enough to find that we were running well, but upon the wrong road. If you are called to the Order, you are called to the rules of the Order. This is the way wherein to run. God's way for you, and your way for Him. We should love it all, if we had the spirit of our state. *Quomodo dilexi legem Tuam Domine, tota die meditatio mea est.* All the day long do I love to think of God's will, and God's law for me in the rules of my state. How they help me on to Him! Has He not given them to me as helps to Himself? Has He not given them as my portion? *Portio mea Domine, dixi custodire legem Tuam.* "Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, and on it he shall meditate day and night." Let us have our will and our heart in the laws of our state; and let us remember that the small exercises and observances of rule are meant to tell, little by little, on the formation of our religious and spiritual life, by subduing us to obedience, obedience subduing us to God; and thus it is seen again how the rules as well as the vows are instrumental means in hand for helping us to accomplish the main work of life, the getting on to God by the union of love. As means to such an end, therefore, the rules ought to be loved, and let it be our portion and our privilege to observe them.

¹ "Bene currunt, in via non currunt," Serm. 141, *de verb Joan.*

XXIV

ORDINARY ACTIONS

It is always the greatest consolation to remember that the real value of life and work before God is from the interior, and not from any amount of external show or magnitude. The world indeed judges from appearances, and considers those to be great who have much to show. But "the fashion of this world passeth away." There is an interior world within us that is lasting. "The kingdom of God is within you." The soul of man is the kingdom of God—made for God, belonging to Him, with the ability to know, love, and serve Him; the intellect the recipient of Divine knowledge, the will of Divine love. What vast capabilities are here. All who are wise enough to recognise the Creator as the one and only Good, and to know that He has made man capable of Himself, will see that they may, and can, and should bring the inner world within them into subjection to Him who made it. Then God will live and govern therein, and the more everything is subject to Him there, the more will He give of His abundance thereto. But all will be His. "Of His fulness we have all received." It is this inner life between the soul and Himself

that God chiefly regards. "Man seeth the things that appear, but God regardeth the heart."¹ The extent therefore to which the Spirit of God governs the whole man will be the test and value of his life before God; and the degree to which the workings of his daily actions are under the influence of grace and love will determine their supernatural merit. The mere glamour of external appearances is consequently purely accidental. If such externals belong properly, as they often do, to particular states of life, they are all in order; and if they are animated by the Spirit of God they are truly acceptable to God and valued by Him according to their degree of inner grace and love, the external part appertaining to what is called accidental merit. On the same lines all whose outer lives are very ordinary, humble, and hidden would have their accidental merit according to their outer works, and their essential merit according to their inner spirit. If they have given themselves to God, and are governed by His Spirit, and work well from the principle of His love, it is evident that the Divine element will largely engage their lives, and the spirit of Divine charity poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost will enter into their works, vivifying all, spurring them on to good things,² and making "all that

¹ 1 Kings 16. 7.

² "Ut Te tota virtute diligant, et quæ Tibi placita sunt tota dilectione perficiant."—*Inter. Orat. Missæ.*

is bitter sweet and savoury." And from all this, as S. Thomas teaches, a small act done from great love will be more meritorious than a great act done from small love.¹ So that a sermon preached with three degrees of love will be less meritorious before God than the sweeping of a room with four degrees, although its accidental merit may be superior. Whereas if the spirit of the preacher was but human, and that of the sweeper divine, it is evident how far higher before God the latter will be by a common action than the former by something which is notable: and all because of the interior, not the exterior.

I. Let all who are settled in their state of life train themselves to contentment therein; as S. Paul says, "Let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God,"² feeling that externals are but accidentals, and that the real thing is the life of mutual love between the soul and God.

It is certainly a pity to be pining for "accidents," instead of which we should be "set upon realities." What solid satisfaction and comfort one of interior life with God enjoys. Maybe such a one has but ordinary actions to offer Him. What of that? He has rich interior life, and

¹ "Parvum opus ex magna caritate factum, magis est meritorium, quam magnum opus ex parva caritate. Principalitas enim meriti est in Caritate, in aliis autem secundum quod caritate informantur" (3 Sen. D. 35, A. 4, q. 2 and D. 30, Q. 1, A. 3, 5).

² 1 Cor. 7. 24.

that is the real thing. Look at our Lord's hidden life for thirty years. He gives us the lesson Himself. Who could have done such grand externals as our Blessed Lord Himself? But He wills to teach us the value before God of ordinary works. Let it be well impressed on us. What sort of spirit can that be which is not content to serve God in works of humility and obedience (which nevertheless bring us straight His will to be done), but must be employed over something dazzling, and all this from arrangements of self-love and will? *Omnes quærent quæ sua sunt.* This it is that brings the human spirit into things divine. True lovers of God leave the arrangement of all the externals of their life to the Divine Providence. They don't ask to go here or there, they don't seek office, nor do they refuse it. Nor are they found working for their own ends. When they are set to work, they go to it, and if they are left at home, they have always work within, between themselves and God. The common works of daily life bespeak to them the will of God. *Thy will be done.* Much has to be seen to in His kingdom within, and the enjoyment of His presence is to them of all things the most desirable. When He gives the word, they are ready to go forth. Such a one, in S. Augustine's words, is always quiet, always active; after the example of God Himself, *semper agens, semper quietus.* As the reality of life is within, so happiness and

contentment are there, and the ordinary actions appertaining to externals are sufficient for a loving soul, as they were sufficient for our Lord at Nazareth.

II. The ordinary works of daily life make up the material of our perfection. And hence it is said that perfection is to be found in ordinary actions. But as this presupposes that the material actions are quickened by the inner form or spirit, we must bring ourselves under the influence of the Spirit of God, and train ourselves to move from the principle of His love.¹

It would never do to suppose that mere performance of outer works, however noble, would suffice before God. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."² He looks before all to man's inner life; it is there He is in contact with him, and before all else He commands the heart's love; so that the greatest works of earth will avail nothing for heavenly rewards unless the Spirit of God be in them. Does not S. Paul enumerate the grandest externals, adding that without the inner spirit we are as a sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal? If all the great works he names are as nothing before God without the inner life of love, certainly our ordinary actions must be animated with the Divine prin-

¹ "First make clean the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside may become clean," S. Matt. 23. 26.

² S. John 4. 24.

ciple, if they are to be truly worthy of God and heaven.¹ Let the Divine Providence therefore arrange our outward life. Let us be well contented with ordinary, humble, obscure works, if such be His will. But let no one on that account settle down to indolence and heedlessness. There is much to be done. We have to offer ourselves to the influence of the Spirit of God, then seize on the principle of His love, and work thereby, so that our common material may be animated divinely, as even the old heathen poet says—

“*Est Deus in nobis; agitante calescimus Illo.*”

and then small works become great, because of the Divine Spirit within them; and that inner spirit of love is our perfecting principle, and little by little it changes us; it moves us to work well, both internally and externally; it eliminates opposing elements and gradually subdues us to the Divine love and will, and all by means of the ordinary toils and trials of daily life.

III. Understanding that our ordinary actions consist of outer work and inner spirit, both have to be seen to; the works must be done well, and the spirit of love must be in them. In this way it is that souls go on to their perfection by means of ordinary actions.

It will be of the greatest help to all souls in right earnest about spiritual progress, and wishing to progress by means of the ordinary works

¹ “*Vis merendi est in omnibus virtutibus ex caritate, quæ habet ipsum finem pro objecto*” (S. Thom. iv. Sen. D. 49, Q. 1, A. 4).

of daily life, to grasp at the outset what they have within them, viz. the principle of God's love or theological charity, and use it, like they might use a little music or a little language that they have, seeing that practice makes perfect. For "nothing is sweeter than love;"¹ we want love in all we do, and all we suffer; and ordinary acts without love in them are like dry shells without the kernel. As it is love and love only that unites with God, it is clear that ordinary actions have no virtue of themselves to this end; nay, even extraordinary actions, as we have seen from S. Paul, even though the speaking with the tongues of angels, will not do it. Therefore the sooner we grasp the higher love, and use it, the better. All this being premised we have to train ourselves to work well in spirituals, as we do in temporals. Look at the ordinary acts of the children of the world; they are perfection straight off—people wouldn't have it otherwise. Look at this dressmaker, look at this hairdresser, look at that actress; it is perfection all round. How is it? They have trained themselves to it. They practise daily. Go into a chemist's shop, and let him serve you. See all his finished ways for your sake. Everything is neat, everything in its place; the smallest detail he does for you is perfect, to the clean paper, string, and sealing-wax, and all done and given to you with readiness and pleasure. Think now. Will you work for God as well as

¹ "Imit.," B. 3, c. 5.

this man works for you? Why should you not train yourself to work for God, and study how to please Him in your ordinary actions, as carefully as these children of the world train themselves to work for creatures, and study how to please them in all the ordinary business of their daily life? This is what is called the unanswerable argument.

Let us come then to our work for God. The soul of our actions we have already seen to, for that takes the first place. But the works themselves must be well done. Will God have you and your works if you do not work well? Judge yourself if you would employ bad workmen in your service; if your dress, and your hair, and the rest are not properly done, or were not properly done in the world, you know how it would be. "If I am a Father, where is my honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord"¹ We may get on to God and to perfection by our ordinary works if we work well, inwardly and outwardly; and to this we may train ourselves gradually, and we may practise daily and hourly. Why should we be less careful in the service of God than others are in the service of the world? Why should we not love divine things as much as they love worldly things?

To the due fulfilment of our ordinary works, besides what is already said, we might often help ourselves much by the saying, *Age quod agis*.

¹ Mal. i. 6.

Do what you are doing—that is, be present in the present work ; give your mind to it, and your heart ; and under them the other powers work as required. God is the God of the present, and you have to serve Him now by this present work ; therefore do not now be thinking of past things, or looking forward to future things, but be all for the present. This is really about the chief secret for doing ordinary actions well. Probably the very large majority of even holy souls fail in the perfection of their ordinary actions just for want of acting upon this. Their souls are elsewhere instead of being in what they are about. How often, even in the midst of sacred, and even divine things, our thoughts are far away in other things. Therefore, *age quod agis*. This work, whatever it is, can only be done once. This beautiful office in the choir that I am now saying, I can never say again. I may say another like it on a future day, but this actual one now passes away moment by moment, and can never be recalled. So it is with each office, and with each action. Everything done is only once done. The moments never return. So that if I do not work well, the work before God is imperfect. The only plan therefore is to labour for the gradual perfection of our inner spirit and our outer works. After long, faithful, loving practice we may become, by God's grace, good workers. As for perfection, we shall be fortunate if we get to that a quarter of an hour before we die.

XXV

SPIRIT AND DISCIPLINE

*SPIRITUS est qui vivificat.*¹ It is the spirit that giveth life. This appertains first to the individual, then to the community. The community is made up of individuals. As the individuals are, so will the community be. All ought to think of this. They have duties to themselves and duties to the community. Each one must have a right spirit within him, and govern his life by self-discipline. Then we can speak of the spirit and discipline of a community.

The spirit regards the interior, and discipline the exterior life. Each soul must have its inner and its outer life. And the whole community needs governing by the right spirit, and then has its varied external works to attend to, wherein discipline must find its place.

I. The spirit of an individual and of a community signifies, in the first instance, the Spirit of God inhabiting the soul and inhabiting the community, and moving each or all together, as the case may be, by His love, to the ordinary works belonging to their state and office.

¹ 1 S. John 6. 64.

“The spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world,”¹ and governs all the works of nature, “reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things sweetly.”² In the realm of grace, when the Spirit of God took possession of the Church, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”³ Thus the Spirit of God is the governing spirit of the Church, and all the great departments of her organisation, from the Apostolic See with her surroundings—the episcopate, the priesthood, and the religious orders—to the vast society of the faithful, share, according to their dispositions, in the influx of the Divine Spirit, whether collectively or individually.

But here comes another consideration—the precious life of grace and love diffused within us by the Holy Ghost, and all their treasures are contained and carried by us in earthen vessels. The Church militant, is made up of men and not of angels; and men have, and must have, their human spirit. The Spirit of God engaging the Church does not destroy the human element therein, neither by engaging the individual soul does He destroy the human spirit. But the human spirit may hinder much the workings of the Divine Spirit, if the life of grace be not sufficiently in the ascendancy. Hence the constant business of all who are in right earnest with God, and who labour daily for their spiritual improvement and progress, will be to bring their

¹ “Wisd.” 1. 7.

² “Wisd.” 8. 1.

³ Acts 2. 4.

nature more and more into due subordination to grace, and their human spirit into subordination to the Spirit of God. We can easily see that if all in a community were thus minded, how largely the Good Spirit would enter into that community, and what a united spirit would be there. For how could there be a united spirit when each one thinks, speaks, and acts from the impulse, likings, and self-seekings of his own private spirit? No two are alike; and if all go their own way, clearly the community will become an agglomeration of private spirits; whereas, if the Christian and Catholic doctrine of life be attended to, all those who profess to dedicate themselves to God, whether in the religious or priestly life, will see that for a united community spirit it will be needful to recognise the Spirit of God governing souls by Divine charity, as poured upon the Church and upon all in the state of grace, and as willing to give Himself to each individual soul that will make place for Him. Now here it is that the human spirit so often stands in the way. God does not force any one to holiness against his will, nor does the Spirit of God force any soul into subjection to Himself; so that if souls *will* keep themselves to themselves, and govern themselves just by the natural light they have, and seek for no life of love and contact with the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, in the nature of the case they live and work mainly by their natural lights, governing both

themselves and others by the human spirit, albeit they have deep in their souls the grace of God, from which they receive much light also. Yet degrees there are, and must be ; and there will be the ascendancy in one or the other. Some have much of the Spirit of God, and their human spirit is subdued thereto, as S. Paul says, "those who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." ¹ Others do not thus offer themselves, nor do they seek God with their whole heart, nor are they willing to give up their own human modes of action ; therefore they do not make room for the good spirit within them, and so His operations in them are very limited. With their human spirit come out their natural faults, both in their own lives and in their governance of others ; and if the majority in any community are so, it stands to reason that the human spirit will largely reign, and the Spirit of God—it must be said—be stifled thereby ; ² for He will not force Himself into souls against their will. If what is said of a community be said of large portions of the Church, as indeed was the case in the times of Arianism and Protestantism, and is always more or less working from the beginning to the present, and will be to the end—it is clear that so far the Spirit of God is hindered in His possession and governance of the Church by the human

¹ Rom. 8. 14.

² "Extinguish not the spirit," 1 Thess. 5. 19.

spirit. Hence S. Paul: "I beseech you, walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called; careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."¹ We might remember that the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace are always ensured in matters of faith by all submitting, and even "bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ."² So also in things of grace, love, and spiritual life, if the human spirit submitted to the Divine and brought itself into the like happy captivity, there would be a united spirit in communities and in the Church. Meanwhile, each one has committed to him the care of his own individuality. Each soul is the kingdom of God, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, therefore whatever others do, let each one see to himself. Shall we not make place for our Lord God in His own kingdom—His own temple? If all did this together how united we should all be, as in faith, so in love and work. Doubtless we should then have "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

II. As the soul moves the body to its outer works, so the Spirit of God, by the habit of His love, moves us to the duties of our state and office, governing communities by the discipline of the rule, and individuals by the discipline of conscience and will-power.

Discipline may be defined in its general notion as being the good will on the part of Superiors

¹ Eph. 4. 1, 3.

² 2 Cor. 10. 5.

to uphold the rule both by authority and example, and the corresponding will on the part of subjects to obey it readily and cheerfully. Each one, also, by means of his own spirit and self-discipline, will be moved to observe the rules of his state of life and office as being appointed means of spiritual progress appertaining to the vocation he has received.

The great guarantee for the observance of discipline, whether in Superiors or subjects, will be to be men of principle. In civil life discipline is rigidly observed. In the army, navy, and other governmental departments, the principle is of course a natural one. The powers that be are the authority, and they must be obeyed. It is the principle rather of fear than love. But in the Church and in religious life we must be men of highest principle, which is the principle of love, and God's love too; and this because the authority is Divine, and our obedience is not as to men but as to God. If the principle of love to God as a moving power were well developed in us all, how different life would be. If it were felt throughout a community that Superiors governed from this principle, and if Superiors felt that their subjects were prepared always to work and to obey from this principle, it would of course show that the community was governed by the Spirit of God, and discipline would follow, as the effect follows its cause. But if we do not grasp the higher, we necessarily fall upon some-

thing lower. And the human spirit is inconstant. We have to consider what sort of a humour such a one is in ; we know not how he will take us—he may be in a generous mood, or he may be snappish. All this is natural, but it is not exactly principle, nor is it good training for those in the earlier stages of their formation when they are so receptive and so easily impressed. But principles are so many and various that they need a vast amount of discretion and common-sense in their application. Allowances have to be made for different natures, and for human nature itself ; some have to be drawn with the “cords of Adam,” and often with S. Paul we have to become weak to the weak to gain the weak. It is said of S. Edmund of Canterbury that “he was unable, or found it difficult, to make allowances for that deviation from strict law and principle which every practical ruler of men has to admit as a working hypothesis. Hence his attitude in the government of his diocese involved him in quarrels and contentions that lasted till his death.”¹ Often it will be a matter of a choice of evils, and sometimes things are best left alone. Corrections at times do more harm than good. Hence *Discretio est auriga virtutum*.² The very virtues themselves need regulating. Then there is S. Paul’s principle, vastly helpful in many cases :

¹ Gasquet’s “Henry the Third,” c. 9.

² S. Bern., Sermon. 49 in Cantic.

"The letter killeth." ¹ Very often it will not give a "working hypothesis" to apply the letter of the law. But the "spirit quickeneth." Sometimes even we have to remember Cicero's saying : *Summum jus, summa injuria*. S. Paul again tells us that he gave the brethren milk rather than strong diet, because they "were not able as yet," and he could not speak to them as unto spiritual men.² It is clear that while the best things are suitable to "the few," they may not be suitable to "the many." And as the *raison d'être* of the pastoral office is to gain souls to God, the means used to gain them must be adapted to the purpose. A soul may be gained in time by gentle treatment and forbearance that would be repelled by a peremptory order. All this is part of the discipline required in the governance of souls, since the gaining and the keeping and the bettering of them is the very end of discipline.

III. It has to be repeated, however, again and again that each individual must train himself, and *that* throughout his life, and independently of Superiors, in the ways both of spirit and discipline. It is simply want both of faith and love if this be neglected. We are in the service of God. It is for Him, for His love and will, that we must cultivate our spirit and live under discipline. Have we not said, and does not our Lord say that "the kingdom of God is within you" ? God is willing to govern and enrich His

¹ 2 Cor. 3. 6.

² 1 Cor. 3. 1.

kingdom. His grace, His light, His love are for us. But we want the spirit of our state; we want heart and love in the Divine service. We are not to neglect the spirit of our daily life just because the Superior's eye is not upon us. Wherever we are, alone or with others, we are always with God, and ought to train ourselves to constant attention to Him, as He is ever so attentive to us. But for doing this consistently, we need self-discipline. So it is in the business of life. So it is in our business with God Himself. We may see from all this how much spirit and discipline act and react on one another; just as soul and body do. The inner spirit needs discipline for its own maintenance and strength: and discipline for its own order, encouragement, and working depends upon the strong principle of love within.

XXVI

KNOWING, DOING, AND PERSEVERING

“IF you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them.”¹ Needless to say, there is a vast difference between knowing and doing; and between doing now and then and continuing to do; and between continuing to do for a long time, and continuing consistently to do till the very end of life, come what may.

I. The knowing of things is vastly important and necessary. How can any one do anything if he does not know how to do it? How could you speak in Greek if you did not know Greek? How could you play music if you know nothing about it? As philosophy says, *Nil volitum, nisi præcognitum*. So, if we wish to go in the way of spiritual life to God, we must first know what the way is; therefore let all cultivate their knowledge of spiritual things. If you love to know anything at all, love to know God and the things of God. Remember, at the outset, we are creatures of habit. A habit is formed by gradual exercise and practice. When you first begin, your pleasure may not be very great; but as you apply yourself, your interest grows, and after a

¹ S. John 13. 17.

time you like your subject more and more. It is true some begin a thing, and then let it drop. They taste a little, but do not cultivate their taste. Other things engage them. If they do not like one, they like another. Their thoughts will go somewhere. Their affections will feed on something. If they do not grasp higher things, to a dead certainty they fall on lower. We cannot live without knowing, and we cannot live without loving, any more than we can live without breathing and moving. This being so, it will make all the difference to our lives as to what we choose to engage ourselves upon. What can be the meaning of frittering away our time and our powers in a series of merely natural, pleasant, perishable, vain, and very fleeting gratifications? It is like children playing with their toys. And our faculties are so great, so capable of aspiring upwards and onwards; our aspirations indeed are divine. Our tendency, as Plato puts it, is to "the great ocean of the beautiful," and the nearer any one approaches thereto, he tells us, "the greater measure will he ensure to himself of goodness and happiness."¹ This may be considered as one form or variety of the universal law of gravitation pervading all mankind, as in the natural world.

Therefore if we take up the knowledge of anything, let us take up the knowledge of God and divine things. Nothing is more beautiful to the mind, more delightfully attractive and engaging

¹ Plato, *Phædrus*.

if we are in earnest with it. But how can any one look at it as one among many things, and try it a little, and let it drop, and then turn to fleeting vanities, to things that come and go like the waves of the sea, rising and falling, and none of them acquiring consistency? "Vanity of vanities. One generation passeth away, and another cometh. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing."¹

The sight of God in nature, the view of His wonderful works therein, ought to rivet our attention at once. When we see things fair, we should think of Him who is most fair. How stupendous are His works, as we see the sun, moon, and stars! And the world about us, and the minds and hearts of those around us, ought to turn us to Him, the beauteous Primal Cause of all things. Then the whole kingdom of grace—the Incarnation, Jesus and Mary, the Angels and Saints, the Holy Ghost and the Church, our Lord's Sacramental Life, the Holy Scriptures, the lives of the saints on earth, the Fathers and Doctors with their splendid writings, and all the holy, contemplative, mystic souls, intimate friends of our Lord and the angels, and their writings so full of light and love—here we find God and the things of God, enough to engage us for life—the most beautiful things on earth. Why are we not full of them? Why do we turn to such heaps of inferior material? We generally like the best things. People prefer gold to silver, and

¹ Eccles. 1. 2, 4, 8.

silver to copper. They like to be friends with the rich and powerful. And here are things divine—divinely beautiful and all soul-satisfying. Yet; oh for the blindness of man and the perversity of nature. Poor souls! how they are to be pitied, who content themselves with so little! God has infinite treasure to bestow, and they turn aside and turn away to things so perishable.

This is to tell us how much we have to engage our attention upon. Of course when the spiritual eye is opened we shall see that the knowing is to lead us to the doing, and the doing means in brief the reformation of our souls.

II. Our Lord tells us that if any man hears His word, and *does it not*, he shall be like to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; but he that heareth His word, and *doth* it, is like to a wise man who built his house on a rock.¹ How often the word of God strikes us. In sermons, books, the Scriptures, and in the lights of reason and conscience. This tells us that we hear much and know much. The truths of faith speak to us, they invite us to holy life and action. The best principles of spiritual life are shown to us in our annual retreats and in the ordinary reading of spiritual books. But, somehow, we do not take in what we hear and read; it is often like the seed by the wayside, that does not sink in; or like that sown on the rock, that grows a little and then withers away. How is it, and why is it, that we have not more real care of

¹ S. Luke 6. 47.

divine things? Are we like the land growing thorns that choke the good seed? Are not spiritual things really stifled in their growth within us, by a host of idle gratifications? Some read a little spirituality once or twice a week, and frivolity every day—a quarter of an hour to a spiritual book, and three or four hours to a novel; in the former there is little heart, in the latter overflowing interest. What is this? Is it not the choking of the good seed? Does not reason speak? Does not conscience cry out? Maybe they are stifled too.

What we are learning now is that besides being hearers we must be doers of the word; and besides professing our principles, we must practise them. What is the meaning of knowing the way if we do not go the way? We will be very practical here.

Do you know that in order to do anything whatever, you must always take three steps? If you want to cross the room, three steps must be taken. If you want to go to London or to Rome, three steps must be taken. If you want to make a dress, or to cook the dinner, it is the same—three steps must be taken. It is the same in spiritual things—three steps must be taken. And if you do not take them, no wonder things are not done, and they will not be done. You will be anxious to know what the three steps are.

I. The first step is *desire*. If you want to cross the room, or go to London, or do anything else, you see at once, if you do not want to move,

or mean to move, you will not move. In like manner ask yourself—do you desire, really and truly, to cultivate spiritual things? Do you desire to give yourself to the love and service of God with all your heart? Do you desire to have the true spirit of your state—to love it, love its duties, and love doing them well? You will do nothing of this unless you desire to do it. You desire many other things, and you do them. You desire your holiday when the time comes. You want your dinner, and your sleep. If you did not want them, you would not take them. Apply all this to spiritual things, and to the duties of your state. If they are not attended to, not done, your desires must be elsewhere.

2. But desire is only the first step—the mere desire to cross the room does not take you across; nor does the desire of dinner give you the dinner, and so of the rest. The desire is indispensable, but it does not do the thing. The second step is just as necessary. The first step leads to the second, and the second is not taken without the first. What is the second step to be taken for doing anything and everything? It is resolution. If you mean to cross the room, you must determine that you will do it. If you mean to go to London, you must resolve to go, and so of all the rest. Now to spiritual things, now to divine things, now to the spirit of your state. Are you determined about these things? If you are not, they will never be done. Some have good desires, but weak resolutions. Some say,

"I wish to love God ;" "I should like to be a fervent religious or priest." This is only the first step. If you stay there and talk, how do you suppose the thing will be done ? You have will-power. Why do you not use it effectually ? How would it be about your holiday, about your dinner ? You want something more than desires, and you know it too. Where there is a will there is a way. Have a little of the like wisdom in spirituals that you have in temporals. If you make up your mind that you must see to the things of nature, such as meals, holidays, sleep, and the rest, why do you not make up your mind with the same clearness and decision for the things of grace, and see that you have the love of your heart given to God, that you have your daily mental prayer, that you are free from mere frivolities, and set upon realities ? Time is going away, and your habits one way or the other are forming. If frivolous things get the ascendancy over spiritual things, where will you be ? And after a time it is difficult to form and unform our ways. Resolution, then, is the second step. It is quite indispensable. Are you resolved to be a man of God ? To be, or not to be, that is the question.

3. But even all your desires and resolutions will not do the work. They are the first two steps, absolutely requisite and necessary ; but the thing is not done till the third step is taken. You perceive that the desire to cross the room does not take you across, nor does the resolution

to cross take you across. Something more is needed before the thing is done. Your resolution to dine does not give you your dinner any more than the desire does, but it brings you a step nearer to it. What is the third and last step? It is practice. It is doing the thing. When from desiring and resolving to cross the room, you cross it; when from desiring and resolving to get your dinner, you get it; when from desiring and resolving to get your holiday, you get it, then the three steps are taken, then the thing is done; so that it is true to say that the thing is not done until it *is* done. Now—"be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." Desires in the love and service of God are excellent, desires of spiritual progress most requisite, desires to be fervent religious, worthy priests, men of prayer, men of God, and furnished to every good work, all as it should be. Resolutions are better still, as being nearer to the doing. Yet it must not be forgotten, many there are in the ways both of nature and grace who have their desires and who make their resolutions, and there they stay, or rather go back—for there is no staying still here below. They do not get beyond desires and resolutions. The things are not done.

We have to be "doers of the word." God tells us to love Him with our whole heart. Is that our aim? If it is, we want real spiritual life. He gives us the beginnings in the life of grace. But the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed. Do we cultivate our

grace ? Do we live and work by faith and love ? For all this we want prayer and mortification. Do we desire to progress, and do we resolve to progress both in one and the other ? We ought to love our state of life as the chosen way to the end ; and we ought to love its duties, and love to do them. Do we desire all this, and resolve to do it, and do it ? “ Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” ¹

III. We may desire to do things, resolve to do them, and do them once in a way. Once in a way does not say much. If we had dinner, and had a holiday, and did a little music once in a way, we should hardly be in settled condition, whether physically or artistically. A man's character is determined by his habits, not by a stray act or two. It is little therefore to take up spirituality as an occasional entertainment. However, it may well be that those dedicated to God in the religious and the priestly life do look in earnest to their spiritual culture and progress ; for sad it is for any one to choose a state of life, and then not have the spirit of his state. But we all know that human nature is apt to be inconstant ; and it may easily happen to some, especially to those wanting design and system in their life, to begin, and to go on, and to continue in their good desires and resolutions ; thus for many years they cultivate spiritual things, fulfilling in the main their proper duties. Some, however, begin well and then fall off—tepidity

¹ S. James 1. 22.

comes on. Or they get familiar with holy things and with spiritual books, and the relish they formerly had for them somehow departs. Others are very susceptible to worldly influences, and have not sufficient force of will in case any strong temptation might arise. As our Lord says, "they last for a while, but in time of temptation they fall away." It must be largely felt, too, nowadays, that it is most easy to be caught up by the prevailing temper of the times, and to be drawn in by the free-thinking spirit that is so much at large now in men's minds and writings, and that all meet so frequently who mix much in the world. Let it be impressed upon us—reading is to the mind what feeding is to the body. Your food soon becomes assimilated with yourself, and if you take unwholesome or poisonous food, you rue the consequences. How utterly upsetting to the spiritual constitution all this becomes. Is it to be wondered at that so many deflect, so many stumble, and others fall away? How can souls keep up their love for the divine and the supernatural when they are run away with by all these dark activities of the human, not to say the diabolical spirit? "This, I know, that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions."¹

Others deteriorate because they neglect either prayer on the one side, or mortification on the other; and these two exercises must go on together for the development of our love, and the maintenance

¹ Eccles. 7. 30.

of our spiritual progress ; and clearly so, for mental prayer brings us to God, and mortification keeps us aloof from the fascinations of creatures.

The long and the short of it all is that it is not enough to begin a religious and a spiritual course unless we keep it up, and persevere in it till the end, come what may. It is not the beginning nor the continuation of a journey that gets us to the journey's end. We do not get there till we get there, nor is there any meaning in starting or in continuing the way unless we mean to finish it. Hence, the Apostle says, " We faint not "—that is, our strength keeps up, we do not desist, nor are we disabled with the toils and trials of the way—" although our outward man is corrupted," although we carry about with us the weakness and corruption of nature, yet " our inward man is renewed day by day." ¹ We see no falling off here, but the daily renewal of spiritual life, strength, and progress.

We said at the beginning of the Retreat that our actual work during the time was to be the conversion of the soul to God with the whole heart. *Convertimini ad Me in toto corde vestro*—" Be converted to Me with all your heart, saith the Lord." " Our conversion to God is not an incident, but an attitude." ² We do not make a great bound during retreat and then get back again to our old ways. We turn to God by a distinct preference of the heart ; we choose Him,

¹ 2 Cor. 4. 16.

² From Fr. Vinc. McNabb, O. P.

we give ourselves to Him, we offer our whole future life to Him. We know that His kingdom is within us, and that there, within us, He desires to have His "homeliest home" on earth. He lives and works with us there, and we live and work with Him. This is the mutual life of love between the soul and God. It never falls away. It is the life of heaven begun on earth. Therefore having once turned to God with the whole heart, we must be with Him evermore. To live and work with Him by mutual love must be the whole habit of our life—not all at once attained to, indeed, but proceeding and progressing little by little, the inward man being renewed day by day. It makes another thing of life here below. It enlarges and strengthens both mind and heart, quickening and animating us in all our ordinary works. "It spurs us on to do great things, and makes all that is bitter sweet and savoury."¹ Let us begin it now in right earnest. *Dixi, nunc capî*—the conversion to God with the whole heart. We are invited to it. This Retreat shows us the work. But we begin it to carry it on; and this, not for a time, then giving over, but we continue it through life, come what may. And we persevere in the work by progressing to the end. And the end is not gained until it is gained. Not he that begins, not he that continues, but he that perseveres to the end shall be saved.

¹ "Imit.," B. 3, c. 5.

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